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A MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS.—(See page 93.)

FALLACY

OF

GHOSTS, DREAMS, AND OMENS;

WITH STORIES OF

WITCHCRAFT, LIFE-IN-DEATH,

AND

MONOMANIA.

BY CHARLES OLLIER.

AUTHOR OF "FERRERS," "INESILLA," ETC.

Who would believe what strange bugbears
Mankind creates itself of fears?

HUDIBRAS.

LONDON:
CHARLES OLLIER,
SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.
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FALLACY

OF

SPECTRAL APPEARANCES.

Persons, after a debauch of liquor, or under the influence of terror, or in the deliria of a fever, or in a fit of lunacy, or even walking in their sleep, have had their brain as deeply impressed with *chimerical* representations as they could possibly have been, had these representations struck their senses.—SHENSTONE: "*An Opinion of Ghosts.*"

> And *Fancy's* multiplying sight
> View'd all the scenes *invisible* of night.
>
> COWLEY.

> And this they call a light and a revealing!
> Wise as the clown who, plodding home at night
> In autumn, turns at call of fancied elf,
> And sees upon the fog, with ghastly feeling,
> A giant shadow in its imminent might,
> *Which his own lanthorn throws up from himself.*
>
> LEIGH HUNT.

Who would believe what strange bugbears
Mankind creates itself of fears?
That spring like fern, that insect weed,
Equivocally, without seed;
And have no possible foundation,
But merely in th' imagination:
And yet can do more dreadful feats,
Than hags, with all their imps and teats:
Make more bewitch and haunt themselves,
Than all their nurseries of elves.
For fear does things so like a witch,
'Tis hard t' unriddle which is which;
Sets up communities of senses,
To chop and change intelligences;
As Rosicrusian virtuosis
Can see with ears, and hear with noses:
And when they neither see nor hear,
Have more than both supplied by fear;
That makes 'em in the dark see visions,
And hag themselves with apparitions:
And when their eyes discover least,
Discern the subtlest objects best.

HUDIBRAS.

SPECTRAL APPEARANCES.

"It faded on the crowing of the cock," says Marcellus to Horatio, speaking of the grand phantom of Hamlet's father—the most awful apparition yet evoked by the imagination of man,—a royal shade more potent as the monarch of spirits, than when, in the body, it wielded the sceptre of the then mighty Denmark. But, with all its attributes of power, "the majesty of buried Denmark" could only "revisit the *glimpses of the moon*, making *night* hideous." As *dawn* came on, the illusion "*faded*."

Daylight is not propitious to ghosts, who require a dim and shadowy arena,—darkness when they can get it; or, in default of that, an artificial light which mostly includes heavy glooms favourable to "their exits and their entrances."

They glimmer in front of a picture, of which the background must be obscure; and they demand in their spectators a certain frame of mind brought about either by the temporary bewilderment of somnolency, by moral or physical derangement, by sorrow or fear, by boundless credulity, or by the natural depression of mental energy existing, more or less, in all human beings at very late hours.

Ghosts never prey on sagacious or healthy subjects, surrounded by cheerful accessories. "Your lordship," said Sir Thomas Wilde, some time ago, to Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst, "is not the *kind of man* to see apparitions; besides, you *do not eat suppers*."

Phantoms, then, according to one of our greatest law-authorities, who is, moreover, an irresistible vindicator of common sense, must have ready-prepared witnesses, suffering under dyspepsia, or otherwise morbidly affected. In addition to this, they require to be furnished with a certain apparatus, like conjurors; or they are nothing.

To speak somewhat in the manner of the fantastical old physician of Norwich, one mig

say, "Why ghosts are never seen in daylight, or why they generally affect a *tête-à-tête*, though puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture." The fact is, that laughter is death to ghosts; and what but laughter would attend the appearance of one of them, at noon, in Pall Mall? Lord Byron fancied he saw a phantom of a Black Friar at Newstead Abbey; but, to use his own language, it

"Appear'd
Now in the moonlight, and now *lapsed in shade*."

It would be the very triumph of the world of spirits if one of them could maintain its pretensions in the eye of day. This would settle all doubt. But no; they do not dare such an issue: they know "a trick worth two of that."

An able but nameless writer, in 1766, thus expresses himself as to ghost-craft: "Does not every tool of superstition carefully limit his apparitions to time, place, and person—to night, to a corner, and to a coward? Why are ghosts eternally banished from sunshine and a crowd? What mighty causes restrain their stalking in daylight and in company? If they are benevolent to mankind, why should they decline opportu-

nities of at once securing *indubitable* testimony of their existence—of accepting that reverence their nature would attract, and that gratitude their kindness would excite?"

Concerning spirits, the Jews of the present day are said to entertain certain doctrines, in which credulity is combined with a singularly unconscious and ludicrous betrayal of unbelief. They hold, that an apparition has power to appear visibly, and to injure any person *who is by himself, and in the dark.* That to *two persons*, though in the dark, the apparition has only power to show itself, but not to do them any injury. And to *three persons*, being altogether, though in the dark, it has neither the power of showing itself, nor of injuring any one of them. The *light of a single small candle* is a safeguard to a man against the power of an apparition, so as not to be injured invisibly. *The light of a flambeau* is of equal power against an apparition, when a person is alone, as when three are together.

To what does all this amount, but that solitude and darkness create illusions, which could not come to pass in light, and amongst society?

And even in solitude and darkness such preposterous deceptions would not arise were human beings, when in their infancy, carefully protected from the inoculation of superstitious ideas. That which is impressed on the brain in childhood, can hardly ever be effaced. In after years reason may contradict it; but there it remains indelibly fixed on the sensorium, and in moments of moral or physical debility, its power becomes dominant. An Indian savage can no more restore to its natural shape his head, which had been flattened in infancy, than a civilized European can disclaim any belief instilled into him before adolescence. The absurdity, how great soever, becomes part and parcel of his moral being: the tree must grow as the twig is bent.

Dr. Hibbert has done inestimable service to the present age, in his wise and conclusive work, the "Philosophy of Apparitions;" and even a hundred years ago, when superstition was far more dominant than now, there were able labourers in the cause of reason—men who could use the weapons, both of argument and ridicule, against debasing and enervating credulity.

"I cannot but think it an honest endeavour," says "The Craftsman" of November, 1749, "and a good office done to mankind, to expose popular lies, especially such as vitiate the understanding, and render reasonable creatures less wise or less sober. Superstition and credulity may appear innocent and impotent; but they are quite different things. Nothing is more powerful—nothing more formidable; and they are useful and important tools in the hands of designing men. I can bring a person to *act* what I please, by the same art and authority by which I can bring him to *believe* what I please; and if I can make him sufficiently credulous, I will undertake to make him likewise sufficiently cruel."

No doubt. Here may be seen the origin of some of the blackest acts of our fellow-creatures.

Of the germinating effect of absurd stories implanted in infancy, a very amusing exposition is given in an old periodical work, called "The London Journal," of Oct. 7, 1732:—

"Some ghosts and spectres owe their existence to a timorous or distempered imagination, in the midst of a dark and gloomy interval;

others take their rise from the *reciprocal pleasure of deluding and of being deluded;* and for the rest, we must impute them to the early errors of infancy, and a motley mixture of low and vulgar education. Mothers and grandmothers, aunts and nurses, begin the cheat; and, from little horrors and hideous stories of bug-bears, mormoes and fairies, raw-head-and-bloody-bones, walking lights, will-o'-the-wisps, and hobgoblins, they train us up by degrees to the belief of a more terrible ghost and apparition. Thus instructed, *or thus imposed upon,* we begin to listen to the old legendary and traditional accounts of local ghosts, which, like the genii of the ancients, have been reported, time immemorial, to haunt certain particular family seats and cities, famous for their antiquity and decay. Of this sort are the apparitions that are natives and denizens of Verulam, Reculver, and Rochester; the demon of Tedworth; the black dog of Winchester; and the Barr Guest of York. Hence we proceed to many other extravagances of the same kind, and give some share of credit to the outlying night-walkers and suburban ghosts, raised by petty printers and halfpenny pamphleteers."

Such is the rise and progress of ghost-craft.

It may be laid down as a general maxim, that any one who thinks he has seen a ghost, may take the vision as a symptom that his bodily health is deranged. Let him, therefore, seek medical advice, and, ten to one, the spectre will no more haunt him. To see a ghost, is, *ipso facto*, to be a subject for the physician.

Every encouragement should be given to those who endeavour to account for any phenomenon by a natural solution. Of this kind is the following attempt, in 1755, to answer the question, why naked spectres have, under certain influences of weather, been seen hovering over graves, fields of battle, &c. :—

"As a corpse dissolves, each species of particles returns to its element; the grosser to the earth, and the subtler to the air. These last pervade the pores of ground in which the corpse is laid, carrying with them some earthy particles, and are thereby hindered from sudden dissipation. Rising out of the ground in the order they lay whilst they compounded a mass, they represent a draught of the figure of which they were a part."

Now, though we were not aware that such dreadful vapours were ever *seen* (they manifest themselves to *another sense* pretty frequently in city Golgothas), and though the verity or error of the explication must be left to the decision of able physiologists, we honour the man who sought a rational, instead of an irrational, cause for such spectra.

To shew how fond men are of the marvellous, it is only necessary to point to the well-known story of a lady, buried before life was extinct, and who, having been roused from her trance by some one who came to rob her coffin, returned in the body to her husband's home, and lived many years afterwards. This, though it probably had a veritable origin, was so tempting to the imagination as to be related as having occurred in every part of Europe. England has claimed it in two or three counties;* so has Italy, Flanders, Germany, and France; and it is reported to have happened in different centuries. Boccaccio, in his Decameron, has recorded it as a southern

* The writer thinks there is a monument in Cripplegate Church commemorating a similar story.

romance of real life, and it has been chronicled over and over again as a genuine northern event. Now it is hardly within the doctrine of chances, that so astounding and peculiar an incident could have happened, in all its particulars, more than once. But no matter for that: it was a marvel and a mystery, and, therefore, was too good a thing for any nation to lose sight of in its exciting traditions.

Of this class of wonders—the more wonderful for being *real*—the following is the most ghastly relation extant.

Doctor Crafft gives many histories of persons, who, being interred alive, have expired in their graves and tombs, as has afterwards been discovered by various marks made not only in their sepulchres, but also on their own bodies. He, in a particular manner, makes mention of a young lady of Auxbourg, who, falling into a syncope (mistaken for death) was buried in a deep vault, without being covered with earth, because her friends thought it sufficient to have the vault carefully shut up. Some years after, however, one of the same family happening to die, the vault was opened, and the body of the

young lady found on the stairs at its entry, without any fingers on the right hand.

No ghost-story in the world can compete with this in horror. One may laugh at phantoms, but here is, indeed, a scaring and hideous misery.

The delusions of ghost-craft arise from a variety of causes. Some of them are accidental and natural, such as visual deceptions, when "the eyes are made the fools of the other senses," of which nearly every human being must have had experience; others are brought about by morbific agency; not a few by imposture and confederacy; more by fear; and many by the wilfulness of credulity in ghost-seers themselves. Let us give one or two modern instances which have come to the knowledge of the present writer, and were never printed previously to the first impression of the present series:—

In 1807, a baronet, now living, was summoned from school to a town on the coast where his father had died suddenly. Arriving late at night, after a fatiguing journey, with spirits exhausted by the unexpected loss he had sustained, the young heir requested to be shewn

to his bed-room, where his sorrow and agitation were soon lulled by sleep, the "balm of hurt minds."

Between one or two o'clock in the morning, he was awakened by a low, wailing sound, *dirge-like*, (so it seemed to his half-slumbering senses). He lifted himself from his pillow and listened. It was no dream. The moaning noise continued, and grew louder and louder.

While our youth looked about by the gleam of a night-lamp in his chamber, the two leaves of a folding-door opposite him swung open as if to give space for the entrance of a ghastly pageant. It was as startling an announcement as that which in Spenser's "Faery Queene" was made to Britomart when, in "chearelesse night,

> the yron wicket open flew,
> As it with mighty leavers had been tore;
> And forth yssewd, as on the ready flore
> Of some theatre, a grave personage."

Having remained awhile motionless with dismal apprehension, the young baronet crept out of bed, took his lamp, and stole breathlessly into the adjoining room. The first object that met his view was a figure in white drapery, with a visage of

THE YOUTH, THE COFFIN, AND THE PHANTOM.

the same colour as its robes. It advanced towards him, face to face. Being, for a moment, terrified, the youth dared not proceed; and as he stopped, the spectre also became immoveable. But this was not all that encountered his gaze in that grim apartment. A coffin was there; and on it were plumes of black feathers, waving and bending as if supernaturally forced to take part in some dreary ceremony.

The lamenting sound—the sudden swinging open of the folding-doors seemingly by their own impulse—the white figure—the coffin and bowing plumes—were all calculated to impress him who beheld them with a belief that ghostly influence was at work; and had he yielded to his fear and rushed from the place, he would have given another phantom-story to the already existing *veritable* stock.

But, though only sixteen years of age, the youthful baronet was one of those few persons whose presence of mind rarely deserts them. Summoning his faculties, and coolly investigating what he saw, he ascertained that the pale spectre was a reflection in a pier-glass (till then unperceived) of himself in his night-gear, which, as

he moved, would of course seem to be moving towards him. The wailing noise was produced by wind through partially-opened windows, near which the corpse lay; this wind, increasing in strength during a gusty night, had forced open the folding-doors which had been only imperfectly and hastily secured by the servants, (perhaps in trepidation) when they prepared a bed for the youth; and the strong breeze had also given a waving motion to the black plumes placed on his father's coffin.

Having fully ascertained these points, the young mourner retired to his inner apartment, deliberately bolted the folding-doors, offered up a prayer to his Maker, and was again blessed by sleep.

The following are other instances of natural and accidental causes of spectral impressions:—

A young lady, known to the present writer, was terrified, one night, by seeing at the foot of her bed a tall shadowy phantom making perpetual obeisances. This was grotesque and horrible enough—the more so because of its combination with the ludicrous; and though it is quite natural that beauty should be in the receipt

of homage, the damsel, accustomed to adulation at other times, was alarmed by such intrusion in "the dead waist and middle of the night."

Hiding her head under the bed-clothes, she collected her scattered spirits, took counsel within herself, and having recovered her presence of mind, looked with a scrutinizing eye at the spectre. There it was still, making salaams according to the Eastern mode of adoration. "A figure of the other world!" thought she. "Hideous!"

How far she might have blamed her attraction for bringing such unwelcome visitants, no one can tell; but her self-possession had acquired strength; and self-possession is fatal to ghosts, whether their advent be to worship or to terrify. Though trembling in every limb, she arose, went to the window, and detected the "cause of the effect." The house (her father's) was on the border of a suburban by-road; and a gas-lamp recently placed there had projected into the room a shadow of an intermediate tree, whose branches swayed in the night-breeze. She took care afterwards to close the shutters.

Garments hung upon pegs in bed-rooms are

often, during night, taken for ghostly figures. Sir Walter Scott relates a remarkable instance of this as having occurred to himself; and many persons have been similarly deceived. I have heard of a gentleman of nervous temperament, (who always burnt a lamp in his chamber) being haunted by a colossal figure robed and turbaned like a Turk, and having a fiery visage. Night after night did this gaunt apparition present itself. The visitation at length became intolerable, and the sufferer, terrified into courage,

> ("For men as resolute appear
> With too much, as too little, fear,")

desperately resolved to attack the disturber of his nocturnal slumbers. It would not do to let his impulse subside; so he jumped out of bed, rushed towards the phantom, seized it—and found the window-curtain in his grasp. The fiery face was ascertained to be a large brass knob, over which the upper part of the curtain was thrown.

In Bennet and Tyerman's "Voyages and Travels," we have a couple of good stories which all but turned out to be additions to the "well-and-

numerously attested" ghost *facts*. But, unfortunately, one of the actors was a man of stubborn resolution and unyielding common-sense, who, in detecting the causes of the seeming supernatural mysteries, prevented the possibility of adapting them to any subsequent accident or death; for it is wonderful what dexterity is manifested by ghost-seers in fitting a fact to a foregone conclusion.

The stories have been quoted elsewhere; but as some of my readers may not have seen them, a page or two is given to their insertion.

"Our chief mate said, that on board a ship, in which he had served, the mate on duty ordered some of the youths to reef the main-top-sail. When the first got up, he heard a strange voice saying, 'It blows hard!' The lad waited for no more; he was down in a trice, and told his adventure. A second immediately ascended, laughing at the folly of his companion, but returned even more quickly, declaring, he was quite sure that a voice, not of this world, had cried in his ear, 'It blows hard!' Another went, and another,—but each came back with the same tale.

"At length the mate, having sent up the whole watch, ran up the shrouds himself; and when he reached the haunted spot, heard the dreadful words distinctly uttered in his ears—'It blows hard!' 'Ay, ay, old one! but blow it ever so hard, we must ease the ear-rings for all that,' replied the mate undauntedly; and, looking round, he saw a fine parrot perched on one of the clues—the thoughtless author of the false alarms—which had probably escaped from some other vessel, but had not previously been discovered to take refuge on this.

"Another of our officers mentioned that, on one of his voyages, he remembered a boy having been sent up to clear a rope which had got foul above the mizen-top. Presently, however, he came back trembling, and almost tumbling to the bottom, declaring that he had seen 'Old Davy' aft the cross-trees; moreover, that the Evil One had a huge head and face, with prick-ears, and eyes as bright as fire. Two or three others were sent up in succession; to all of whom the apparition glared forth, and was identified by each to be 'Old Davy,' sure enough.

"The mate, in a rage, at length mounted

himself; when resolutely, as in the former case, searching for the bug-bear, he soon ascertained the innocent cause of so much terror to be a large horned owl, so lodged, as to be out of sight to those who ascended on the other side of the vessel; but which, when any one approached the cross-trees, popped up his portentous visage to see what was coming. The mate brought him down in triumph, and 'Old Davy,' the owl, became a very peaceable shipmate among the crew, who were no longer scared by his horns and eyes; for sailors turn their backs on nothing when they know what it is.

"Had the birds, in these two instances, departed as they came, of course they would have been deemed supernatural visitants to the respective ships, by all who had heard the one or seen the other."

An edifying story is told of a haunted house, in which, it was said, an heir-apparent had been murdered by his uncle. Dreadful sounds, shrieks, and unearthly moanings were heard in the mansion, (a baronial castle,) and for nearly a century no one dared inhabit it. At length, one of the heroes of Waterloo, to whom the property de-

scended, was determined to unravel the mystery; for which purpose he resolved to sleep in the castle alone, on the night he took possession. After his first slumber, the screams and hollow moans were, as usual, audible; and leaving his bed, he followed the sounds till he arrived, as he thought, in their immediate vicinity. This was the great hall of his ancestors. The unseen voice evidently came from behind the arras in this place. Springing towards the spot, he ran his sword into it; but the blade was so fixed that he could not withdraw it.

Having retraced his steps to his chamber, he betook himself to his couch, and slept till morning, when several persons called at the castle, inquiring if he had met the ghost.

"Oh, yes," he replied; "the disturber is now dead as a door-nail; he lies behind the screen, where my sword has transfixed him. Bring a crowbar, and we'll haul the spectre out."

With such a leader, and broad day to boot, the throng tore down the screen where the sword was fixed, when, in a recess, they found the fragments of a chapel organ, of which the wooden trunks had, a hundred years ago, been used as

props to shore up the work when the hall was repaired. These had been forgotten; and the northern blast, finding its way through crannies in the wall, had played wild and discordant music on the pipes.

Of visions occasioned by morbific agency, the following are specimens:—

A lady who had been to Sierra Leone with her husband (an army captain) was compelled to leave the settlement on account of ill-health, and return to England by herself. During the voyage, she was too weak to quit her cabin, which was divided by a screen, having on one side a sofa where she reclined during the day, and on the other her night-berth.

One afternoon, when not far from the termination of her voyage, she saw, as she reposed on the sofa, her husband (whom she had left in Africa) seated by her side. In spite of a deadly faintness that came over her, she uttered a hurried exclamation of wonder at seeing him there, when he instantly arose, and glided from her view behind the screen.

A convulsive outcry brought the ship's surgeon to her cabin.

"My husband is here!" gasped she; "why did you not tell me so?"

"You have been dreaming, dear madam," replied the doctor; "Captain —— is at Sierra Leone with his regiment. Compose yourself."

"He is here, I tell you," rejoined she with a wild emphasis. "Go behind that screen, and you will see him."

The surgeon drew aside the screen. No one was visible there; when, the lady, exclaiming, "Then he is dead!" sank back, and became, for a time, insensible.

This idea was too strong to be repressed. Being certain she had seen her husband's ghost, the lady felt already the desolation of a widow. Soon after landing in England, she received a letter from her husband, announcing his probable return earlier than was expected. But even this did not remove the gloomy impression. "He must have died in that horrible climate," thought she, "after his letter was dispatched." At length, however, the captain arrived in London in good health, and the writer believes that both he and his lady are living at the present hour.

This vision was nothing more than a "brain-

image," or hallucination of disease, aided probably, as Coleridge says, by "one of those unconscious half-sleeps, or rather those rapid alternations of the sleeping with the half-waking state, which is *the true witching time*—

'The season
Wherein the spirits hold their wont to walk,'

—the fruitful matrix of ghosts."

By way of companion to the above, another supposed ominous appearance may be mentioned which was equally fallacious, and occasioned by morbid perceptions resulting from long watchfulness.

A solicitor in London left his private house one morning, telling his wife that he should dine with a friend, and desiring her to send a change of clothes to his chambers in Lincoln's Inn, where, to save time, he should dress. This was accordingly done. It was the month of November. Between five and six in the evening, the lady, who, with the sweet and untiring solicitude of a mother, had several days and nights watched the bed-side of a sick infant, heard a carriage draw up at her door; and, happening at that

moment to be going towards the nursery, saw, from above-stairs, her husband pass into his dressing room.

"Why," said she to a female-servant, "I thought your master was going to dinner from his chambers. Were not his clothes sent there?"

"I believe so, ma'am," was the answer.

"It has been neglected," responded the lady; "his carriage has just stopped at the door, and he is now in his dressing-room. Go and ask his man why the commands were disobeyed."

The girl went on her errand, and returned, saying the things had been sent as ordered, and that her master was not in the house. Strong in her first impression, the lady descended to her husband's dressing-room—that room into which, a few moments before, she had seen him enter: it was vacant!

Hour after hour did she pass in dismal perturbation, refusing to be comforted. Not knowing whither her husband intended to go, she was ignorant where to make inquiry; and only after his return would she be persuaded that a warning phantom had not been seen by her. Had any accident happened to her husband in his home-

ward path, nothing would have removed her belief in a supernatural vision.

This lady's delusion was the fruit of long anxiety and sleeplessness at the couch of her child. Her perceptions were weakened, wandering, and perverted. Hypochondria had set in. It is fitting that for every accidental *coincidence* in these matters, numerous *non-coincidences* should be recorded.

A narration is somewhere made of a hard drinker who saw his own ghost in every apartment of his house. In vain did he try to elude the apparition by going from the parlour to the study—from the study to the drawing-room—from the drawing-room to his bed-chamber. In each and all sat his other self, scaring him with ghastly and mysterious ubiquity.

This was, in every sense of the word, an intense *monomania*—an extravagant case of egotism, assuming the horrible—a wild delusion of *delirium tremens*.

The singular cases of diseased imagination manifested by Walderstein, a celebrated physician of the university of Gottingen, and by Nicolai, a German bookseller, are too well known

to need recital in this place. Both these men, though terribly oppressed by phantoms of the mind, arising, as they themselves thought, from physical infirmity and disease, have done great service to the cause of common-sense by subjecting the phenomena under which they laboured to calm, philosophical investigation; and so perfectly had long practice given them mental command, that they were able, even when the morbid affliction was raging—when the phantoms were actually present—to examine the condition of their mind and nerves, and lay the result before their fellow-creatures.

The following curious instance of a musical ghost occurred in the writer's own family.

A lady having watched several nights by the bed-side of her sister, (a married woman,) suffering under dangerous illness, was at length fairly exhausted by physical fatigue and mental anxiety. Long privation of sleep had worked its bewildering effect. Further attendance was out of the question at that time. It was absolutely necessary that she should repair to her mother's house, and recruit her strength and spirits in order that she might better be able to

resume her affectionate offices on behalf of one so dear to her: and her brother having undertaken to sit up with the patient's husband, and to communicate, in case of need, with his unmarried sister, the latter set out on her return to the maternal home, there to find repose of which she stood so excessively in need.

Utterly weary, worn out, and plodding towards her residence, more by instinct than by perception of outward objects, she almost slept as she walked, and was only roused to consciousness by the sudden glare from a shop-window, produced by a strong light before a polished reflector. Looking about, she could not distinctly remember how she came to be where she was. She felt bewildered and alarmed. Being in the neighbourhood of one of her friends, she thought it would be prudent to call, and, distrustful of further progress in the streets by herself, ask for some one to accompany her. Acccordingly, attended by a servant, she reached her home safely.

But whether her somnolency while walking, or the shock she had received on having been startled into consciousness, or the extreme agita-

tion under which she laboured on account of the critical state of her sister—whether any, or all, of these had induced nervous irritability, certain it is that she had no tendency to sleep on sitting down in her own apartment, where she remained in a state of painful vigilance—her thoughts shaping themselves in all kinds of dreary prognostics.

A pianoforte, closed up, was in the room; and, as the almost-exhausted lady leaned back in her chair, she heard, (so she thought,) the keys of the instrument struck on a sudden by some unseen hand, which, after a wild and dismal prelude, performed a dirge-like melody. She had never before heard the air, nor could she imagine how so mournful, so ghastly, so funereal, so spiritual a character could be given to music. In the weakness of her fear, she started up, grasped the back of the chair for support, and ejaculated to herself, "My sister is dead!—these sounds which seem born of tears, announce to me her dissolution!"

On a sudden the strains ceased; and the returning silence was quickly broken by a loud knocking at the street-door. Gasping with

terror, she staggered to open it, when her brother appeared.

"Maria is just dead!" she shrieked; "you come to tell me so!"

"Be calm, I beseech you," he replied; "I bring you news from the physician that all danger is over, and that she will soon be well."

The delight was too much. The poor watcher fainted in her brother's arms, was conveyed to bed, and, after a night's repose, waked happily at sun-rise.

The imaginary and presaging sounds were falsified, as such omens often are, though the failures are seldom recorded. Had not the hearer of them been so utterly worn out in mind and body, no such sounds would have seemed to be audible. Exhaustion is a cunning impostor.

The best explication ever given of ghost-craft, is that addressed by Cassius to his friend Brutus, after the latter imagined he had seen a phantom in his tent previously to the battle of Philippi.

"In our sect, Brutus," said he, "we have an opinion that we do not always feel or see that

which we suppose we do both see and feel; but our senses being credulous, and therefore easily abused, (*when they are idle and unoccupied in their own objects,*) are induced to imagine they see and conjecture that which in truth they do not. For our mind is quick and cunning to work (without either cause or matter) anything in the imagination whatsoever. And, therefore, the imagination is resembled to clay, and the mind to the potter; who, without any other cause than his fancy and pleasure, changeth it into what fashion and form he will. And this doth the diversity of our dreams shew unto us. For our imagination doth, upon a small fancy, grow from conceit to conceit, altering both in passions and forms of things imagined. The mind of man is ever occupied; and that continual moving is nothing but an imagination. But yet, there is a further cause of this in you; for you being by nature given to melancholic discoursing, and of late continually occupied, *your wits and senses having been overlaboured, do easilier yield to such imaginations.* For to say that there are spirits, and, if there were, that they have the shape of men, or such voices,

or any power at all to come unto us, it is a mockery." *

A physician of the name of Cook, living at Leigh, (in Lancashire) published in 1765 an account of certain spiritual agents who hovered about him, and supplied him with supernatural intelligence concerning his patients. This was obviously a professional puff; but such an effect did it have on the general mind, that a private gentleman (one Mr. King) thought it worth while to destroy the doctor's pretences; and completely did he demolish the nonsense. Cook pretended that to him alone was communicated these warnings. His antagonist answers in the following strain :—

"If we admit the reality of your spirits, and invest them with the character of sagacious guardians of mankind, why should we limit our ideas of their number and locality? What claim has Leigh to such a share of their vigilance?—or your house to the peculiar privilege of being their office of intelligence? Men, as moral agents, are everywhere, I presume, in the same

* North's Plutarch.

defenceless state; and equally require, and are entitled to, the same spiritual correspondence and protection. Were the favour of these gracious beings at all visibly or palpably experienced, it would not be circumscribed, nor partially distributed, nor dispensed only *to a few in the world during hours of solitude and darkness*, but, like every other display of Divine Providence, would be general, constant, and indisputable."

This applies to all ghost-stories: it is conclusive; but truth was not exactly Dr. Cook's object. To be deprived of his warning-ghosts was to lose so many patients; and accordingly, as far as in him lay, he struggled hard to establish his visions to a "liberal and enlightened public." This made King only more determined in his argument; and the result was, that he annihilated the physician and his phantoms at "one fell swoop." The controversy, though now forgotten, is well worth reading.

Demoniacal possession has long been considered an exploded absurdity; but a belief in it seems in some places to be reviving. See what was thought of this nonsense in the times of

James I. and Charles I., by the great politician, profound lawyer, and learned antiquarian, John Selden:

"Casting out devils is mere juggling; they never cast out any but what they first cast in. They do it where for reverence no man shall dare to examine it; they do it in a corner, in a mortice hole,—not in the market-place. They do nothing but what may be done by art; they make the devil fly out of the window in the likeness of a bat, or a rat: why do they not hold him? Why in the likeness of a bat, or a rat, or some such creature? That is, why not in some shape we paint him in, with claws and horns? By this trick they gain much, gain upon men's fancies, and so are reverenced; and certainly if the priest deliver me from him that is my most deadly enemy, I have all the reason in the world to reverence him.

"A person of quality came to my chambers in the Temple, and told me he had two devils in his head, (I wondered what he meant); and just at that time one of them bid him kill me: with that I began to be afraid, and thought he was mad. He said he knew I could cure him; and

therefore entreated me to give him something, for he was resolved he would go to nobody else.

"I, perceiving what an opinion he had of me, and that it was only melancholy that troubled him, took him in hand, and warranted him, if he would follow my directions, to cure him in a short time. I desired him to let me alone about an hour, and then to come again; which he was very willing to do. In the mean time I got a card, and lapped it up handsome in a piece of taffata, and put strings to the taffata, and when he came, gave it him to hang about his neck; withal charged him, that he should not disorder himself neither with eating nor drinking, but *eat very little of supper*, and say his prayers duly when he went to bed, and I made no question but he would be well in three or four days.

"Within that time I went to dinner to his house, and asked him how he did? He said he was much better, but not perfectly well, for in truth he had not dealt clearly with me. He had *four* devils in his head, and he perceived two of them were gone with that which I had given him, but the other two troubled him still.

"'Well,' said I, 'I am glad two of them are gone; I make no doubt but to get away the other two likewise.' So I gave him another thing to hang about his neck.

"Three days after, he came to me to my chamber, and professed he was now as well as ever he was in his life, and did extremely thank me for the great care I had taken of him. I, fearing lest he might relapse into the like distemper, told him that there was none but myself and one more in the whole town that could cure the devils in the head, and that was Doctor Harvey, (whom I had prepared), and wished him, if ever he found himself ill in my absence, to go to him, for he could cure his disease as well as myself.

"The gentleman lived many years, and was never troubled after." *

Subjoined is another victory of good sense *versus* superstition:

"The late Doctor Gooch, in early life, served an apprenticeship at Yarmouth, and had to sleep at the top of his master's house, in a room

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* Selden's "Table Talk," art. *Devils.*

in which there was a skeleton. 'One night,' says he, 'I went to bed; the moonlight, which fell brightly into my room, showed me distinctly the panelled door, behind which hung my silent acquaintance. I could not help thinking of him; I tried to think of something else, but in vain. I shut my eyes, and began to forget myself, when,—whether I was awake or asleep, or between both, I cannot tell,—but suddenly I felt two bony hands grasp my ankles, and pull me down the bed. *If it had been real, it could not have been more distinct.*'"*

This imagined action of the skeleton being felt as "distinctly as if it had been real," what but good sense and a conviction that the circumstance was a physical impossibility, prevented Doctor Gooch from recording it as a supernatural fact? The word "impossibility" is, however, not to be found in the vocabulary of a believer in ghosts.

But ghosts, or ghost stories, will never cease, as long as people can be found who are determined to believe in them, spite of reason or evi-

* *Times*, August, 1830.

dence. The following is a ludicrous instance of obstinate credulity in a ghost-seer.

The mother of a family had occasion, at a late hour, to go to the nursery, for some toilet-article left there. She was in her night-dress. One of her children, and the nurse-maid, who took part of the same bed, were, as she thought, fast asleep. Fearful of waking them, she entered the apartment on tip-toe, and finding what she sought, retired, in the same noiseless manner, stopping, however, at the foot of the bed, to gaze at her infant. The servant, not having closed her eyes, saw the whole proceeding, which, simple and natural as it was, assumed, in her fancy, the character of an unearthly visitation.

"Oh, ma'am," said she, to her mistress, the following morning, "such a dreadful thing happened in the nursery last night!"

"Good heaven! what is the matter?" gasped the lady.

"Why, ma'am, I saw the spirit of my master's mother. She was all in white; glided about the room like a ghost; stopped at the foot of the bed, glared at us, and then vanished. I am sure we shall hear of her death soon."

"Nonsense!" rejoined the lady; "it was myself whom you saw. I went to the nursery for some *eau-de-Cologne*, and took my slippers off, that I might not disturb you and the child. You must be very fond of ghosts, to make me one before my time."

The woman looked incredulous; and not believing her mistress's explanation, propagated far and wide an account of the apparition. In vain did the lady try to undeceive her by doing, next night, the same thing in the same dress; and even when her master's mother visited the house in good health, the servant resolutely adhered to her belief.

With some persons, truth and reason are weak, indeed, when opposed to a love of the spectral and the wonderful. To be terrified is, to them, a luxury. They can't live without what they call "*a sensation*." The ascending-scale of their pleasure is a wedding, a funeral, a murder, an execution by the hangman, and a ghost.

FALLACY OF DREAMS.

To make a *particular* providence of everything that may be thought to happen extraordinarily, (such as dreams, revelations, &c.) is destructive of the idea of God's providence *in general.*—CASAUBON.

> Let no *deluding dreams,* nor dreadful sights,
> Make sudden sad affrights;
> Ne let hob-goblins, names *whose sense we see not,*
> Fray us with things *that be not.*
>
> SPENSER.

DREAMS.

THE physiology of dreams has puzzled the most profound inquirers, who, after all manner of ingenious conjectures, have left the subject just where they found it. Aristotle, Macrobius, Lucretius, Democritus, and other ancients; and Wolfius, Locke, Hartley, Baxter, &c. of the moderns, have speculated in vain—one theory having been uniformly upset by another. Physics are fairly baffled and confounded in the investigation; and psychology is forced to acknowledge in dreams a mystery beyond her solution:

> "Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
> And Metaphysic calls for aid *on Sense!*"*

Some notable guesses have nevertheless been

* Pope's Dunciad.

made; among others, that life itself is but a dream, dimly and feebly heralding the realities to come. The high-priest of English mystics, Sir Thomas Brown, discourses on dreams in his "Religio Medici," after this fashion:—

"There is surely a nearer apprehension of anything that delights us in our dreams than in our waked senses: without this I were unhappy; for my awaked judgment discontents me, ever whispering unto me that I am from my friend; but my friendly dreams in night requite me, and make me think I am within his arms. I thank God for my happy dreams, as I do for my good rest, for there is a satisfaction unto reasonable desires, and such as can be content with a fit of happiness! *and surely it is not a melancholy conceit to think we are all asleep in this world, and that the conceits of this life are as mere dreams to those of the next; as the phantasms of the night to the conceit of the day. There is an equal delusion in both, and the one doth but seem to be the emblem or picture of the other.* We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleep, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul: it is the ligation of sense, but the

liberty of reason: and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleep. At my nativity, my ascendant was the earthly sign of Scorpius; I was born in the planetary hour of Saturn, and I think I have a piece of that leaden planet in me. I am in no way facetious, nor disposed for the mirth and galliardize of company; yet in one dream I can compose a whole comedy, behold the action, apprehend the jests, and laugh myself awake at the conceits thereof. Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams; and this time also would I choose for my devotions; but our grosser memories have then so little hold of our abstracted understandings that they forget the story, and can only relate to our awaked souls a confused and broken tale of that that hath passed. Aristotle, who hath written a singular Tract of Sleep, hath not, methinks, thoroughly defined it: nor yet Galen, though he seems to have corrected it: for noctambuloes and night-walkers, though in their sleep, do yet enjoy the action of their senses; we must therefore say that there is something in us *that is not in the jurisdiction of Morpheus;* and that those

abstracted and ecstatic souls do walk about in their own corpse, as spirits with the bodies they assume, wherein they seem to hear and feel, though indeed the organs are destitute of sense, and their natures of those faculties that should inform them. Thus it is observed, that men sometimes upon the hour of their departure do speak and reason above themselves. For then the soul begins to be freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like herself, and to discourse in a strain above mortality."

But it is not so much in reference to the causes and general nature of dreams, as to their supposed power of divination, that a few words are devoted to them in the present pages. "We know pretty well now," says Horace Walpole, in one of his letters, "that dreams which used to pass for predictions, are imperfect recollections." Be this as it may, the oneirocritics, when baffled in their attempts to establish any *similitude* between the "auguries" of sleep and subsequent or preceding facts, turn about, and vindicate the prophetic character of dreams by *dissimilitude* and *contrariety*. Thus, they are certain to be right one way or the other.

That many remarkable and well-attested dreams have been reconcileable to after-events, is beyond question—night-visions and night-promptings which could not be explained by any theory of connection of ideas, or "imperfect recollections," or revival of associations utterly forgotten by the waking senses. On the contrary, *new images* have been evolved in slumber, apparently pointing towards future events, or seeming to convey awful warnings against unsuspected dangers, or suggesting remedies for evils long endured; and numerous are the cases wherein results have been in unison with the supposed augury. Almost every person has had some such experience. Credulity, therefore, is seldom at a loss for food.

The present writer's dreams have more than once appeared like a magic mirror, in which either things to come, or facts which had happened at a distance, were clearly portrayed; yet does he not believe in the supernatural character of nocturnal suggestions, nor, in the remotest degree, heed them as guides; for, not to mention the thousands of dreams whose so-called foreshowings have never been fulfilled, and

which, consequently, are not recorded, the doctrine of coincidence alone is sufficient to explain occasional similitudes.

Consider. This world is made up of thoughts and events. The thinking faculty of man is almost perpetually at work: his brain teems with images, conjectures, projects, anticipations, hopes; and even sleep does not always arrest the discursiveness of his ideas. Then, in the material world, every moment both of day and night gives birth to some actual event, either of weal or woe; and the wonder is, not that in this hurried crowd of facts and fancies some few, which bear affinity to each other, should meet and jostle, but that this coincidence should not occur oftener than it does. This may account for spectral illusions prefiguring death, as well as for remarkable dreams which "come to pass," even when neither one nor the other can be referred to certain pre-occupied states of mind, or posture of circumstances, or train of ideas naturally leading to the peculiar dream or phantasm.

Of the latter character (namely, that which depends on a previous train of ideas) is the fol-

lowing vision of Sir Christopher Wren, on which Dr. Millingen has philosophically commentated, snatching a choice morsel from the appetite of lovers of the marvellous :—

"It is related of Sir Christopher Wren, that, when at Paris in 1671, being disordered with a 'pain in his reins,' he sent for a physician, who prescribed blood-letting; but he deferred submitting to it, and dreamed that very night that he was in a place where palm-trees grew, and that a woman in a romantic habit offered dates to him. The next day he sent for dates, which cured him. Now, although this cure, brought about by a dream, was considered wonderful, its circumstances offer nothing supernatural. It is more than probable that Sir Christopher had frequently read in foreign works on medicine, that dates were recommended as an efficacious remedy in nephritic complaints; and moreover, had met, in his daily perambulations, female quacks, who exhibit themselves to this day in the French metropolis, fantastically attired, and vending their far-famed nostrums. That he should have remembered dates, and that the phantasm of the she-mountebank might at the same time have struck

his fancy, were two associations by no means improbable."*

The same author says: "Philosophical ingenuity has long been displayed in the most learned disquisitions in an endeavour to account for the nature of dream-phenomena. The strangeness of these visionary perturbations of our rest—their supposed influence on our destinies—their frequent verification by" (might he not more wisely have said, "their frequent coincidence with?") "subsequent events—have always shed a mystic prestige around them; and *superstition, ignorance, and craft* have, in turns, characterized them as warnings of the Divine will, or machinations of an evil spirit."

Superstition, Ignorance, and Craft! Yes, these are the agents that "mantle our clearer reason" —enemies of the happiness, and thwarters of the progress of mankind. One might think a moment's reflection would convince any one that the assumed prophetic character of dreams could not arise from machinations of an evil spirit, (supposing such to exist,) since, to a spirit of this

* "Curiosities of Medical Experience."

nature, no gratification could accrue from warning the dreamer against impending danger, or foretelling inevitable disasters. And surely the Supreme Dispenser of good, who is no respecter of persons, would not select a few individuals on whom to bestow, in dreams, the gift of foresight, and withhold such protection from others, who might perhaps need it more. Any man must be an insufferable egotist who claims, in his own case, an especial and divine interposition to ward off calamities which, on the vast majority of his fellow-creatures, fall without warning, and without even a suspicion of their liability to them. A belief in God's superintending providence is injured by nothing more than by giving credence to so-called partial and exclusive manifestations of it. In proportion as reason is obscured, so is piety clouded.

The Rev. Dr. Casaubon, in his "Treatise of Enthusiasm," says, with equal good sense and holiness (inseparable qualities), "I am one, I confess, that think reason should be highly valued by all creatures that are naturally rational. Neither do I think we need to seek the image of God in man elsewhere than in perfect reason,

such as he was created in. *Holiness and righteousness were but fruits of it.*"

In another place, the same admirable old divine thus expresses himself: "As for dreams, whereof the books and relations of ancients are so full (imputed by them to *revelations*), I see not anything, in most of them, but may very well be ascribed unto mere conceit and superstition. It is the more to be wondered at, I confess, that not only divers poets and some orators and philosophers should tell us of such, but that even learned physicians should ascribe so much unto such fancies. Hippocrates, in his epistles (if *genuinus* Hippocrates, which I can scarcely believe), hath a large relation of the god Esculapius, how he appeared unto him about Democritus's business: Galen often, how that he had a dream to write such and such a book; to go, or to forbear, such a journey. If men give their minds unto such things, there is no question but they shall fancy sometimes—nay, often—much more than there is just ground for, and sometimes, it may be, somewhat may happen extraordinarily. But men, I think, were better want it, by far, if it come by superstition."

Nothing can be more true than this. No *want* can be supplied by Error—the fruitful parent of evil, never the harbinger of good. "In more modern times, we have often seen dreams resorted to, in order to assist the speculations of policy and priestcraft, some of them as absurd in their nature as revolting in their interpretations."* According to Dr. Abercrombie, insanity and dreaming are analogous, the impressions in the former being more or less permanent, while in the latter they are transient. Should this be so, the suggestions of dreams (if acted on) may more often be dangerous than beneficial, a truth of which a remarkable instance is recorded by Aubrey (that insatiable gossip), and alluded to in Evelyn's "Sylva."

A gentlewoman had a daughter, who had long been ill. One night, the patient dreamed that a miraculous intimation had been made to her, that her malady would be cured, were she to take a decoction of yew-leaves. This *revelation* she communicated to her mother, who, after some hesitation, consented to have the draught pre-

* "Curiosities of Medical Experience."

pared. The sufferer took it in full confidence, and very soon her malady did indeed come to a termination—but it was by death!

Here, then, is at once an instance of the fallacy of nocturnal promptings, and of the danger of obeying suggestions originating chiefly in physical disturbance, andnever meant to be obeyed.

Instead of assigning to Dreams the character of divine interpositions, Milton presents Satan as their prompter when, disguised as a reptile, he instils his poison into the ear of the sleeping Eve:

> "Him there they found
> Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
> Assaying by his devilish art to reach
> The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
> Illusions as he list, *phantoms and dreams*." *

Again:

> "In Reason's absence, mimic Fancy wakes
> To imitate her; but, misjoining shapes,
> Wild work produces oft, and most in dreams;
> Ill matching words and deeds long past or late." †

Gay, the poet, has written a metrical tale in ridicule of the belief in the augury of dreams.

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* Paradise Lost: Book iv. † Ibid. Book v.

Scarcely anything can be more striking than the manner in which this story is told; and were it not for the bad taste of the jest at its conclusion, to which I shall not further allude, (a species of offence which Swift, Prior, Gay, and others of that time absurdly mistook for wit,) the narration might be appealed to as a model of homely earnestness and grim solemnity. It is called "A True Story of an Apparition." As Gay's minor poems are little known, the present deserves a citation or two.

A traveller, benighted in the forest of Arden, loses his way among innumerable trees, and is exposed to a storm of rain, thunder, and lightning. At length he sees a stream of light "extending its level ray" between the branches, when, spurring on, he comes before a human habitation:

> "It was an ancient, lonely house, that stood
> Upon the borders of the spacious wood.
> Here towers and antique battlements arise,
> And there in heaps the moulder'd ruin lies.
> Some lord this mansion held in days of yore,
> To chase the wolf, and pierce the foaming boar:
> How changed, alas, from what it once had been!
> 'Tis now degraded to a public inn."

Having dismounted, the traveller is received at the gate by the landlord, who with "frequent cringe," tells him his house is full, and every bed bespoken. To the traveller's solicitations for a garret and straw, or the kitchen fire and an elbow-chair, it is replied, that the garrets are occupied, and that a count's tired footmen had monopolized the kitchen, and were even then snoring round the fire. This was bad news on such a night; but luckily the maid-servant of the inn took pity on the weary stranger:

"'Be brave!' she cries, 'you still may be our guest;
Our haunted room was ever held the best.
If then your valour can the fright sustain
Of rattling curtains and the clinking chain;
If your courageous tongue have power to talk,
When round your bed the horrid ghost shall walk;
If you dare ask it why it leaves its tomb,
I'll see your sheets well air'd, and shew the room.'

Soon as the frighted maid her tale had told,
The stranger enter'd, for his heart was bold.
The damsel led him through a spacious hall,
Where ivy hung the half demolished wall;
She frequent look'd behind, and changed her hue,
While fancy tipt the candle's flame with blue.
And now they gain'd the winding stairs' ascent,
And to the lonesome room of terrors went!

When all was ready, swift retired the maid;
The watch-lights burn; tuckt warm in bed was laid
The hardy stranger, and attends the sprite
Till his accustom'd walk at dead of night.

At first he hears the wind, with hollow roar,
Shake the loose lock, and swing the creaking door;
Nearer and nearer draws the dreadful sound
Of rattling chains, that dragg'd upon the ground:
When, lo! the spectre came, with horrid stride,
Approach'd the bed, and drew the curtains wide."

The phantom now points to its bosom, dyed with blood, and waves its hand thrice. Fortifying his courage with prayer, the traveller questions his nocturnal visitor, and is told, that on being bewildered in the forest, and benighted three years ago, he had put up at that inn, was conveyed to the very chamber he now haunted, where he had been murdered by the hostess, for the sake of his treasure, which the guilty perpetrator had hidden in an adjacent field. The spectre offers to conduct the traveller to the spot, and to reward him with the money, on condition of his bringing the murderer to justice. To what daring deeds will not the hope of riches nerve us?

"The stranger springs from bed,
And boldly follows where the phantom led.
The half-worn stony stairs they now descend,
Where passages obscure their arches bend.
Silent they walk, and now through groves they pass;
Now through wet meads their steps imprint the grass.
At length, amidst a spacious field they came;
There stops the spectre, and ascends in flame.
Amazed he stood; no bush, no briar was found,
To teach his morning search to find the ground.
What could he do?—the night was hideous dark;
Fear shook his joints."

At this moment, the traveller awakes in bed, and finds his night-vision to be nothing more than a dream, very naturally accruing from what had previously been told him by the maid-servant. Thus, the greater number of our dreams are (in Sir Thomas Brown's phraseology) merely "spinning out our awaking thoughts into the phantasms of sleep, which often continue precogitations—making cables of cobwebs, and wildernesses of handsome groves. Besides, Hippocrates hath spoke so little, and the oneirocritical masters have left such frigid interpretations, that there is little encouragement to dream of Paradise itself."

The dream of Marcus Antonius, which Plutarch relates with seeming wonder, is uncon-

sciously accounted for even in the very narration. Octavius Cæsar and Antonius had quarrelled; they could neither of them "bear a brother near the throne:" their respective powers could not co-exist; and Antonius had threatened to send Octavius to prison.

"This young Cæsar, seeing his doings, went unto Cicero and others, which were Antonius' enemies, and by them crept into favour with the senate; and he himself sought the people's good will every manner of way, gathering together the old soldiers of the late deceased Cæsar. Antonius being afraid of this, talked with Octavius in the capitol, and they were apparently reconciled. But the very same night Antonius had a strange dream, who thought that lightning fell upon him, and burnt his right hand. Shortly after, word was brought him that Octavius lay in wait to kill him. Cæsar cleared himself unto him, and told him there was no such matter; but he could not make Antonius believe the contrary. Whereupon they became further enemies than ever."*

* North's Plutarch.

Of course: Antony knew well enough, by the state of things, without the interposition of his dream, that the truce between him and Octavius was a hollow and dangerous one.

The following dream, which the writer had many years ago, though perhaps worthy of note, is capable of explanation, without the slightest reference to supernatural agency.

He and a friend lived in a mercantile house, wherein large sums were kept in gold and bank-notes. This money was deposited every evening by him and this friend in an iron closet fixed in an under-ground stone room. One night, he dreamed that his companion and superior was missing at a usual hour of meeting: inquiry was made everywhere, but no trace could be found of the absentee. Conjectures of the most alarming description arose in the dreamer's mind; until at last a horrible fear smote him that, while taking the money to the safe, he had closed the door on his friend.

He immediately (in his dream) rushed to the stone room, heard some faint groans there, unlocked the iron closet, and drawing open its ponderous door, beheld him of whom he was in

search crushed in that fatal enclosure, and dying.

The terror of the sight awakened him; he started from his pillow, and heard plainly enough a succession of dismal groans close at hand. He and his friend slept in a double-bedded room. He instantly darted to the sufferer's side, who feebly ejaculated, "I am very ill. I feared my groans would not wake you, and I could not call. I am racked with horrible spasms. My breath seems going. I shall be suffocated. Get me something, for God's sake!"

The writer had heard that burnt brandy was useful in such attacks; and having procured some, administered it, and relief was obtained. His friend has often said, that had it not been for the assistance thus given, he believes he should have died.

Now, in this instance, it is plain that the dream was occasioned by the groans imperfectly heard in sleep; and there is nothing wonderful in the dreamer connecting those groans with a familiar friend and constant companion—one for whom he entertained a strong affection.

The writer recollects another dream, which

was nearly coincident with fact. He dreamt that he went from London, on a visit to his uncle, in Wiltshire, and having arrived at the house, found all the family assembled, except one of his female cousins. On inquiry, he was told, that though she was ill, and in her own room, he might go thither and see her. When he entered the apartment, she held up her hand, and burst into tears; and he perceived that her thumb was shattered.

"Look here!" sobbed she. "See what has befallen me! I was taking down one of my father's fowling-pieces, which had long hung over the parlour fire-place. It was loaded, and rusty, and burst when I touched it, mangling my thumb as you now see."

This dream made a strong impression on the writer; and happening to go on the following day to a female relation in London, who was related in the same degree to his cousin, he asked if she had heard lately from Wiltshire. Being answered in the affirmative, he inquired if all friends there were well. "Yes," replied his relative; "but poor E—— has been in some danger, though all is now over. She hurt her

thumb with a thorn, and the wound at one time was so malignant, that it was feared amputation of the joint might become necessary. Owing, however, to youth, and a good constitution, she has perfectly recovered."

Had the writer been of an over-credulous disposition, he might have ascribed this dream, which was so nearly realized, to supernatural interposition. But why should such interposition have taken place? What good could have resulted from it? No: the dream was natural enough as connected with the house of a country gentleman who, being addicted to sports of the field, had fowling-pieces about his premises; and that it should be so nearly allied to a foregone fact, was nothing more than one of the coincidences already indicated.

But what is to be said of those innumerable dreams that *do not* "come true, as the phrase is?" Such, among others, are the supposed revelations which used to be made in sleep to superstitious people of certain numbers in the lottery, and which tempted them, in spite of repeated failures, to buy tickets and be ruined. This, the sapient oneirocritics would call "justi-

fication by contrariety," or, in plain words, it is right because it is wrong. There is no grappling with a determined belief. A dream must either resemble a fact, or not; and, in either case, it would be held by the old "diviners" to have a spiritual significance.

The following vision of this *inappropriate* kind occurred to the present writer.

He sat up till a very late hour one night, intently occupied in reading Dryden's dedication of his "Juvenal" to the Earl of Dorset. This dedication occupies fifty-three closely-printed folio pages, and, in the main, is assuredly not of a nature to inspire grim dreams; since, as is well known, it is a history of the rise and progress of satire, including a masterly criticism on many of the Roman poets. But, after a busy day, the reading, even of such glorious prose as Dryden's, might have been fatiguing; added to which, the night-air was heavy and sultry, and the silence of the room was broken every now and then by a fitful storm, which drove broad floods of rain against the windows, and was then lulled only to begin again.

At last, however, the atmosphere became

clear; and after having finished the long and admirable preface, which had deeply interested him, the reader fell asleep in his chair, lulled by

"Minute drops from off the eaves."

Dozing in a chair is not, however, the most pleasant condition of slumber, and on this occasion the uneasy posture of the sleeper prompted an uneasy dream. He retained a consciousness that he was still in the room, and imagined himself to be, as before, engaged in reading the old folio. But Dryden's subject-matter had somehow changed; his manly, healthy, strenuous style, and dominant fine sense, were transformed into a kind of sickly German mysticism,*—a treatise on phantoms and "chimeras dire," and demons in familiar human shapes. Though offended at what he could not but consider as a sort of apostacy in Dryden, he, nevertheless, read on, and shuddered over a long account of

* It must be admitted that Dryden, in the above-mentioned treatise, has in fact digressed a little into something cognate with mysticism in his remarks on "guardian angels" and "wicked spirits;" but these remarks are only transitory, and he speedily resumes his clear and demonstrative criticism.

devilish incarnations, until he suspected every human being to be a fiend in disguise, himself among the number.

While busied with these dreary speculations, the door of the room appeared to open, and a person with whom he was then but slightly acquainted entered and sat down opposite him.

"What are you reading?" demanded he, with a stern aspect.

"Dryden," replied the dreamer.

"What!" ejaculated the intruder; "Dryden on the incarnation of fiends?"

"Yes," was the reply; "it is in his preface to Juvenal."

"And know you not," continued the other, "that Dryden was himself a fiend; and that to read him is one of the deadly sins? This open book is damning evidence against you. For this you must be slain; and I am sent here to be your executioner!"

He then drew a pistol from his pocket, which he deliberately pointed at the dreamer's head, who was utterly unable to move, or make the least effort to avert the imminent danger. At this moment, a friend rushed in, struck aside the

pistol, and seizing the "executioner," flung him headlong out of the window. This is a point in dreams when most sleepers awake; and so did the present.

Had this dream been considered in the light of a warning or prophecy, the writer would have been led into a grievous mistake, inasmuch as the then "slight acquaintance," who seemed to intrude himself as a sanguinary inquisitor, has since proved a constant and single-hearted friend; while he who came to the rescue has been a cold, double-dealing, selfish, persevering, and plotting enemy.

To dream of church-yards and tombs, and effigies of the departed, has, time out of mind, been held to prefigure speedy death to the dreamer. Of this class of night-visions, a very remarkable one occurred to a lady who is near and dear to the present writer.

She dreamed that a female friend and herself, while walking at noon in some country place (she knew not where), wandered into a lane over-hung with branches of gloomy trees which cast on their path a portentous twilight. Nothing but themselves appeared to move in this lonely

road, the windings of which led the companions to the borders of a secluded and almost hidden burial-place, lying low in a dell beneath their feet. The solitude and subdued light of the spot were oppressive, strange, and ominous. It seemed a region whereon the sun, by some mysterious ordination, was forbidden to shine—a dim and apparently supernatural Necropolis—a shadowy valley not of this world.

The wanderers, with hushed breath, gazed, from some little distance, at the scene before them, hesitating whether, or not, they should penetrate such visionary precincts. To enter so awful a locality seemed to them like a renunciation of the bright world—perhaps of life itself; and they were about to turn away and retrace their steps, when, urged by an irresistible impulse, the dreamer persuaded her companion to venture with her into the sepulchral hollow.

The approach to this silent domain was down a very long flight of steps conducting to a flat space embossed with yews, cypresses, and other trees sacred to the dead; in the midst of which was a hillock, having on its summit a vast mausoleum adorned by niches filled with funereal

effigies. No church was there to sanctify the inclosure which, like a wide and worn-out quarry, was shut in on every side by banks of stony earth.

Our dreamer and her friend descended the steps and reached the level ground beneath, of which some quarters were crowded by old monuments overstained by the sad and faint green of clinging moss and lichens, while in other parts were sundry grave mounds looking freshly as if the earth had only yesterday been heaped up. The remoter portion of this hushed cemetery appeared ruinous, abandoned, and tangled with rank and seedy grass.

In examining the tomb-stones, our wanderers were much struck by the affecting laments carved on some of the most antique; several of which were commemorative of personages who had been dead many centuries. All the inscriptions, however, were not of this loving and pious character: certain of them breathed unforgiving, inhuman, and ungodly maledictions on the sleepers in the earth below, whose frailties and crimes were minutely and mercilessly recorded on their sepulchres.

"God help us!" exclaimed the dreamer's friend. "We are in a fiendish place. We must retreat. A deadly fear is on me. Let us fly."

"Not so," replied the dreamer. "I wish to climb the hillock and look at that stately monument on the summit. I feel no dread. Come, let us mount the steep."

"What!" returned the other, "and pass that grinning statue standing half way up under the black shade of the yew tree?"

"Even so," returned the dreamer; "a statue cannot harm us."

The companions now clambered with difficulty up the crumbling earth, and examined the pompous sepulchre which crowned the mount, admiring its magnitude, its Gothic enrichments, grotesque human shapes, and heraldic devices. They could not, however, ascertain in whose honour it had been erected.

Returning from the elevation, they perceived, with shuddering wonder, that the statue had changed its position, and now stood much lower down. On approaching it, the figure held out its arm as if to assist the dreamer's descent; but, panting with terror, she rapidly darted past, and

A DREAM VISION.

would not accept the proffered and ghastly aid. Quickening their pace, the companions now hastened to escape from the inclosure; but hearing a sound behind them of other footsteps than their own, they turned their heads, and saw that the stone image was striding after them.

"Do not be afraid," gasped the dreamer to her friend, endeavouring to conceal her own terror; "do not be afraid. I understand it: we have trodden on some wires, which have caused the figure to move. It is a foolish trick —nothing more."

They still pushed forward, though now, in proportion as speed was necessary, their feet felt more and more oppressed as if by leaden weights. At length, breathless and scared, they gained the foot of the steps leading out of the cemetery, and were about to rush up them, when the dreamer felt her neck clutched by stony arms. Weak and obstructed as her power of movement had previously been, it was now totally suspended; she was transfixed in the grasp of the hideous effigy. A voice like that of one speaking through a mask, ejaculated, "Your presumption is punished! You are condemned!

Never will you leave this place! How durst you pry into the palace of our king?"

This speech was ludicrous enough; but in dreams, the ludicrous is apt to be converted into the horrible. So was it with the dreamer, who shrieked in a spasm of terror.

The sound of her own cry awakened her, and with transport she hailed the morning light beaming cheerfully through her chamber-windows.

The dream, in all its minute circumstances, was vividly impressed on her mind. On her relating it, many wise women felt certain that the dreamer of such a story could not be long for this world. To descend into a valley of death, and to be fixed in the grasp of a monumental statue, could indicate only one result. The soothsayers, however, were out in their calculations. Several years have passed since this nocturnal vision perplexed the dreamer's sleep, who, thank God! is still living in the enjoyment of a sound mind in a sound frame.

The following is one of the most remarkable and puzzling instances of dream in one place,

and vision in another, on record. It was related above eighty years ago, in the old London Magazine, and deserves to be recalled from dusty oblivion.

A student at an academy in Devonshire dreamt that he was going to London, but having parents living in Gloucestershire, thought he would visit their house in his way to the metropolis. He, accordingly, commenced his journey in imagination; and reaching the parental home, attempted to enter at the front door, but finding it fast, went round to the back, where he gained ready admission. All was hushed: the family had retired for the night. Proceeding to the apartment where his parents lay, he found his father asleep; on which, without disturbing him, he went to the other side the bed, and perceived his mother to be broad awake.

"Mother," said he, "I am going a long journey" (meaning to London), "and have come to bid you good by."

Stricken with fright, and interpreting his words in a fatal sense, she replied, "Dear son, thou art dead!"

The dreamer now awoke, and took no more

notice of the affair than he would of any ordinary dream. But in a few days, he received a letter from his father, informing him that his mother, while in bed, had heard him, on a certain night, (the very night of his dream), try the doors of the house; and after opening the back door, and coming up stairs, he appeared at her side, she being, as she stated, broad awake. She added, that he addressed her by the words above related; on which she uttered, "Dear son, thou art dead!" The vision immediately disappeared; and the good woman, being greatly disturbed, waked her husband, and told him what had occurred.

To this singular conjuncture, however, of dream and vision, *there was no result on either side.* The mother, who believed herself to be awake, was probably in a state of imperfect slumber; but that at the very moment her son was dreaming, she should see, in a vision, his identical dream acted before her, is the most striking coincidence of any in the traditions of oneirocriticism.

A correspondent of the old London Magazine, after relating the above, observes, that had any

thing of moment happened to either party in connection with the dream and vision, (particularly had the son died about the time,) it might have been considered as a divine premonition. But, as neither that, nor anything else of consequence ensued, it must certainly be extravagant to suppose that any supernatural interposition had taken place. "The dreamer," he adds, "is yet (1765) alive, though the affair is now of some years' standing."

Dr. James N. Pinkerton has composed a very able and philosophical Essay on "Sleep and its Phenomena," which the present writer ventures to commend to the earnest attention of all who are interested in such matters. In it, he quotes from an old French author a circumstantial and curious dream of which the predictions were falsified:

"A belief in the prophetic power of dreams," says the doctor, "was universal amongst the ancients, and has been more or less continued to the present time, sometimes even amongst persons of education. Thus, we occasionally hear of individuals having had mysterious communications in their dreams, and events prophecied to

them, which have actually come to pass. That such dreams have occurred, and do yet occur, we have no doubt, but we must regard the fulfilment of them as being entirely the result of accident; for, as Dr. Macnish observes—'any person who examines the nature of the human mind, and the manner in which it operates in dreams, must be convinced, that under no circumstances, except those of a miracle, in which the ordinary laws of nature are triumphed over, can such an event ever take place. The Sacred Writings testify that miracles were common in former times; but I believe, no man of sane mind will contend, that they ever occur in the present state of the world. In judging of these things as now constituted, we must discard supernatural influence altogether, and estimate events according to the general laws, which the Great Ruler of nature has appointed for the guidance of the universe. If, in the present day, it were possible to conceive a suspension of these laws, it must, as in former ages, be in reference to some great event, and to serve some mighty purpose connected with the general interests of the human race; but if faith is to be placed in modern

miracles, we must suppose, that God suspended the above laws for the most trivial and useless of purposes; as, for instance, to intimate to a man that his grandmother will die on a particular day—that a favourite mare has broken her neck —that he has received a present of a brace of game—or that a certain friend will step in and take pot-luck with him on the morrow.'*

"Of the many thousands of dreams which nightly take place, it is not at all surprising, that occasionally *one* may become accidentally verified, which is then immediately cited as being supernatural; whilst those innumerable prophetic dreams, which are not fulfilled, are never again heard of. The following is an excellent illustration of the fallacy of some of these prophetic dreams. It is to be found in a letter addressed to a friend of the writer, 'On the Vanity of Dreams, and upon the Appearance of Spirits,' published in 'Le Mercure Gallante,' for January, 1690.

"'The last proof, my dear friend,' says the writer, 'which I can give on the vanity of dreams, is my surviving after one that I expe-

* Macnish's "Philosophy of Sleep," p. 133.—Third Edition.

rienced on the 22d of September, 1679. I awoke on that day, at five o'clock in the morning, and having fallen asleep again half-an-hour after, I dreamt that I was in my bed, and that the curtain of it was withdrawn at the foot (two circumstances which were true), and that I saw one of my relations, who had died several years before, enter the room, with a countenance as sorrowful as it had formerly been joyous. She seated herself at the foot of my bed, and looked at me with pity. As I knew her to be dead, as well in the dream as in reality, I judged by her sorrow that she was going to announce some bad news to me, and perhaps death; and foreseeing it with sufficient indifference,—'Ah, well,' said I to her, 'I must die, then!' She replied to me, 'It is true.'—'And when?' retorted I; 'immediately?'—'To-day,' replied she. I confess to you the time appeared short; but without being concerned, I interrogated her farther, and asked her, 'in what manner?' She murmured some words which I did not understand, and at that moment I awoke. The importance of a dream so precise, made me take notice of my situation, and I remarked, that I had lain down upon my

right side, my body extended, and both hands resting upon my stomach. I rose to commit my dream to writing, for fear of forgetting any part of it; and finding it accompanied by all the circumstances which are attributed to mysterious and divine missions, I was no sooner dressed than I went to tell my sister-in-law, that, if serious dreams were infallible warnings, she would have no brother-in-law in twenty-four hours. I told her afterwards all that had happened to me, and likewise informed some of my friends, but without betraying the least alarm, and without changing in any respect my usual conduct,—resigning myself to the entire disposal of Providence.'—'Now,' adds the writer, 'if I had been weak enough to give up my mind to the idea that I was going to die, perhaps, I *should* have died.' "*

A singular coincidence has lately taken place, upon which much stress has been laid by the believers in supernatural revelations. I allude to the recent murder of Mr. Hazell, a farmer residing at Dundry, near Bristol.

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* Pinkerton's Essay on "Sleep and its Phenomena."

The deceased had been missing the greater part of Monday the 17th of January; and certain suspicious circumstances occurred which, in all probability, gave rise to conjectures that he had come to his death by foul means. On the following Wednesday night, *two* men dreamt that the body of Mr. Hazell had been discovered in a certain dry well; and upon their communicating this coincidence to some of the deceased's labourers, a lighted candle was procured, the well searched, and the dead body of the unfortunate farmer discovered at the bottom.

This incident has been seized hold of by the "superstitionists" as an undoubted instance of preternatural disclosure; but there is no peremptory necessity for putting such a construction on the facts. Suspicious circumstances, as already stated, had accompanied the farmer's disappearance; and there can be little doubt that the general opinion among the deceased's servants was, that their master had been murdered. The two men who dreamt that the body was discovered in a well, might have been talking together on the subject during the preceding evening, and very possibly had speculated on the likelihood

that the farmer's body—in the event of his having been murdered—would ultimately be discovered in the well in question; especially as such depths present obvious hiding-places, and indeed are frequently used by murderers for concealing the dead bodies of their victims. Granting these suppositions—and nothing is more probable than that they should have been entertained—the fact of the two men dreaming as they did, ceases to be a matter of much wonder; and that their night-visions should be subsequently verified, is reduced to a mere coincidence, and not a very astonishing one.

A gentleman of distinguished genius, with whom the present writer has the honour to be acquainted, related to him a series of dreams, or rather repetitions of one dream, which preceded an important event in his life. This gentleman was engaged to be married; and though the lady of his choice was a person of unquestionable respectability, he was haunted in his dreams by a phantasm of his dead father, who, night after night, pronounced solemn warnings against the meditated union. Of these visions in sleep, the constant recurrence was

certainly very remarkable, and the dreamer, on awakening, used to comfort himself (after the perturbation which such awful councils could not fail to excite) by exclaiming, "Well, thank God, I am not married!" The wedding, nevertheless, eventually took place, and *then the warning vision came no more.* But, as predicted by the dream, the union (without blame on either side) was inauspicious. Had the imagined monitory voice been obeyed, it would have secured the parties concerned from much subsequent discomfort.

This, at first view, might be taken for an undoubted instance of supernatural interposition, especially considering the nightly perseverance of the phantasm, and its total cessation when its warnings could no longer avail. As regards the pertinacious appearance, it should however be remembered, that what makes a strong impression in dreams is almost sure to be repeated.

One can imagine the nocturnal dismay of the sufferer, who well knew what would haunt him on falling into slumber—the apparition's unfailing steps ascending the stairs and entering the

chamber at "the dead waist and middle of the night"—the un-shunnable presence—the sounding of the oracular words—the terror of the dreamer; and then the final waking resolution to exorcise the phantom by rendering its visitations useless.

This, however, is the excitability of fancy. But—not to mention that the dreamer in question is "of imagination all compact," one who, in prose and poetry, has given the world many productions which "it will not willingly let die," and who therefore in his vocation would be likely, even during sleep, to "body forth the forms of things unknown"—it is certain that he himself was not without strong misgivings as to the eligibility of the connexion he was about to form; and that, pondering over the advice his father, had he been living, would probably have given him, our poet's sleep would very naturally be haunted by the image of his parent, and by ominous forebodings.

Another poet, Shelley, was a great dreamer, and at one time kept a record of his dreams; whether with a view to the so-called *science* of oneirocriticism, is not known.

The celebrated Robert Burton, author of the "Anatomy of Melancholy," who was a pious clergyman of our church, discourses at large, in many parts of his book, against greedy credulity. "They that are superstitious," observes he, "are still fearing, suspecting, vexing themselves with auguries, prodigies, false tales, dreams, idle works, unprofitable labours; as Boterus observes, *curâ mentis ancipite versantur:* enemies to God and to themselves. In a word, as Seneca concludes, *Religio Deum colit, superstitio destruit:* superstition destroys, but true religion honours God."*

Montaigne, also, an author whose wisdom has been recognized between two and three centuries, is equally strong in denouncing credulity and superstition.

"There yet remain amongst us," says he, "some practices of divination from the stars, from spirits, from the shapes and complexions of men, from dreams and the like, (a notable example of the *wild curiosity* of our nature to grasp at and anticipate future things, as if we had not enough to do to digest the present.)

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* "Anatomy of Melancholy," Partition 3. Section 4.

"I, for my part, should sooner regulate my affairs by the chance of a die, than by such idle and vain dreams. I see some who are mightily given to study, pore and comment upon their Almanacks, and produce them for authority when any thing has fallen out pat: though it is hardly possible, but that these well-wishers to the mathematics, in saying so much, must sometimes stumble upon some truths amongst an infinite number of lies. For who shoots all day at *Buts* that does not sometimes hit the white? I think never the better of them for some accidental hits. Besides, nobody records their flimflams and false prognostics, forasmuch as they are infinite and common; but if they chop upon one truth, it carries a mighty report, as being rare, incredible, and prodigious. So Diogenes answered him in Samothrace, who showing him in the temple the several offerings and stories, in painting, of those who had escaped shipwreck, said to him, 'Look you,' said he, 'what do you say to so many persons preserved from death by especial favour?' 'Why, I say,' answered Diogenes, 'that

their pictures are not here who were cast away, which were by much the greater number.'"*

Again: "'Tis very probable that visions, enchantments, and all extraordinary effects of that nature, derive their credit principally from the power of imagination, working its chiefest impression upon vulgar and easy souls, whose belief is so strangely imposed upon as to *think they see what they do not.*"†

It is well known that many persons of strong and wise minds, whose reason scorns any credence in superstitious doctrines, are nevertheless unable, on account of physical weakness, to repel the approaches of fear, "in a great apprehension of which," observes Cowley, "there is no extraordinary or extravagant thing that the imagination is not capable of forming."‡

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* Montaigne's Essays. Book i. chap. xi.

† Ibid: Book i. chap. xx. ‡ Notes to Davideis. Book iii.

FALLACY

OF

SUPPOSED OMINOUS NIGHT NOISES.

Noncrede then took occasion to speak, and endeavoured to reduce his dear brother to his right senses. 'Twas indeed an enterprise in which 'twas impossible for him to succeed; for nothing happens more rarely than the bringing people off from their prejudices, and engaging them to determinations absolutely contrary to what they were resolved on. However, Noncrede was willing to venture some arguments to bring this honest gentleman to reason. I shall recite here those which I'm informed he urged.—
HISTORY OF MONSIEUR OUFLE.

GIACOMO. Listen! What sound is that?
ORSINO. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack; *nought else.*
SHELLEY.

OMINOUS NIGHT NOISES.

MANY thousand men and women (particularly the latter) have been tormented from infancy to age by a dread of omens, strange noises, death-watches, ghosts, visions, fiends, hobgoblins, witches, necromancers, &c. Even now, in the nineteenth century, this folly, though much diminished by the advance of knowledge, has not ceased to exist. It will always be found in company with ignorance; and ignorance still makes her abode in many right-worshipful families no less than in the hovels of the poor.

If superstition could be cherished by any class of men of cultivated intellect, it might rashly

be predicated that poets, of all others, would be such men; for the very nature of their vocation demands what Milton calls the "high-raised phantasy." Yet it is certain that by the greatest poets a healthy tone in this respect is constantly maintained. The prodigality of their imagination presents us indeed with "visions and enchantments drear;" but on the other hand, by way of antidote, they lose no opportunity of denouncing irrational belief: they love nature; and, as one of them (Coleridge) has said,

> "In nature there is nothing melancholy."

In the 9th Canto, Book the Second, of the "Faery Queene," Spenser exhibits the chamber of "Phantastes," and speaks plainly enough of its illusions:—

> "And all the chamber fillèd was with flyes,
> Which buzzèd all about, and made such sound
> That they encombred all men's eares and eyes;
> Like many swarmes of bees assembled round,
> After their hives with honny do abound.
> All those were *idle thoughtes and fantasies,*
> *Devices, dreames, opinions unsound,*
> *Shewes, visions, sooth-sayès, and prophecies;*
> *And all that feignèd is, as leasings, tales, and lies.*

"Emongst them all sate he which wonnèd there,
That hight Phantastes by his nature trew;
A man of yeares, yet fresh as mote appere,
Of swarth complexion and of crabbed hew,
That him full of melancholy did shew;
Bent, hollow, beetle browes, sharpe, staring eyes,
That mad or foolish seemd; one, by his vew,
Mote deeme him borne with ill-disposèd skyes,
When oblique Saturne sate in th' house of agonyes." *

And in another poem (the "Epithalamion") he says, invoking a quiet night,—

"Let no deluding dreams, nor dreadful sights,
Make sudden, sad affrights;
Ne let hob-goblins, *names whose sense we see not,*
Fray us with things that be not."

Shakspeare and Milton are equally emphatic against superstition; and Bacon, discoursing of prophecies (not of *divine* prophecies), after speaking of their fallacies, adds, "There are

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* In commenting on this last line, Upton says, "The aspect of Saturn, by astrologers, was always deemed malignant, *impio Saturno*, as Horace, alluding to this opinion, says, L. ii., O. xvii. And Chaucer calls him 'pale Saturnus the cold,' Kn. T. 2445.

'I do vengeance and pleine correction
While I dwell in the signe of the Leon.
My loking' (i.e., *aspect*) 'is the fader of Pestilence.'"

numbers of the like kind, especially if you include dreams and predictions of astrology. My judgment is, that they ought all to be despised, and ought to serve but for winter-talk by the fireside. That that hath given them grace and some credit, consisteth in three things:—First, that men mark when they hit, and *never mark when they miss;* as they do generally also of dreams. The second is, that probable conjectures, or obscure traditions, *many times turn themselves into prophecies*, while the nature of man, *which coveteth divination*, thinks it no peril to *foretel* that which indeed they do but *collect*. The third and last (which is the great one) is, that almost all of them, being infinite in number, have been impostures, and *by idle and crafty brains merely contrived and feigned after the event is past.*"

In another place, this great man says, "Superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Without a veil, superstition is a deformed thing; for, as it addeth deformity to an ape to be like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion maketh it the more deformed."

But to our present subject—Ominous night-

noises. These are numerous; and most persons are apt to invest them with a mysterious character, when a little reflection would refer them to very natural causes. In the first place, the silence of night renders things audible that would be drowned in the turmoil and bustle of the day. Of these too-often alarming sounds, the trivial, and even ridiculous, origin is not unworthy of notice. Cats are prodigal agents in such matters; and there can be little doubt that the greater number of ominous noises which frighten sober people out of their senses, are attributable to them.

A young cat, of a very sociable turn, fond of human company, and belonging to the present writer, is in the habit, especially at night, of knocking with its forehead three times upon the door of whatever room it may desire to enter. On hearing such a summons, any person, sitting in the hush of a winter evening, would seize a candle, open the door, and, looking level with his eyes, while the cat glided in with noiseless steps at his feet, would protest that the sound came from something invisible, and terrify his family with all manner of horrid portents, which, if some

member of it should chance to be infirm of health, might tend to a fatal fulfilment. Once, indeed, and it was at midnight, too, this very summons caused a momentary alarm in one of the writer's relatives, who, knowing that every one in the house (except herself and companion) was a-bed, started and looked aghast at hearing three thumps against the parlour door.

"'Tis only our little black cat," said the writer; "you shall see her enter."

Opening the door, and holding the light downwards, puss was seen to steal in, sure enough, and take her place quietly on an ottoman under the table.

A knowledge of this common, but too often unobserved fact, might perhaps prevent much mystification and cloudy terror, and might, moreover, explain many "well-authenticated" and grim stories of night-noises.

In other ways, too, cats, which are singularly active at night (indeed they are truly the rakes who turn night into day), originate strange and unexpected sounds; since, not to mention their talent for throwing down tins and crockery, they have a remarkable faculty of rendering their

steps audible or inaudible as they please. They can descend stairs with sounding foot-falls, or glide downwards as if their paws were made of wool. Cats have more contrivance and cunning than human beings are apt to suppose, though it is not easy to "pluck out the heart of their mystery."

When the present writer lived a little way in the country, he built an out-house on one side his dwelling, wherein garden-seeds were stored, and garden-implements deposited. From this shed, an inner door communicated with the kitchen-stairs. There were no means of access from without; the wooden flap, a few inches in size, contrived for admission of air, not being large enough for a baby to pass through.

One night, when he sat up very late, the silence was broken by a sudden sharp report, followed by the creaking of a door, and stealthy footsteps down the kitchen stairs. Here was a case for a policeman, had such officials been in existence at that time (nearly thirty years ago). The writer, however, quickly followed the steps, and saw the house-cat, which had been missing some hours, stationed at the kitchen door. Puss had been

prowling outside till she was tired, when, jumping in through the open flap of the seed-house, and knocking down the prop which kept it apart, had occasioned by its fall, the sudden noise. Then pushing aside the inner door, which was not latched, the animal descended towards its usual place of rest, the kitchen.

Had not this been promptly discovered, a notable story might have been manufactured of ghostly and invisible footsteps, and horrible nocturnal sounds.

Rats, also, are busy in the dark, ascending drains, and squealing, not like Shakspeare's Roman ghosts, *in the streets*, but at the mouth of house-sinks. These noises have, no doubt, often passed with old cultivators of the marvellous for the gibbering of unquiet spirits, and been so recorded. Strange and monotonous wailings, like a lamenting human voice, are not unfrequently produced by air passing through empty water pipes. These are heard only at night, because, during day, they are "over-noised" by bustle and conversation. Even the obvious rattling of doors, shutters, and windows in a gusty night, and the moaning of wind through a keyhole,

have been known to create dismal conjectures and suspicions of unearthly visitants.

> "The wind is up: hark! how it howls! methinks
> Till now I never heard a sound so dreary!
> Doors creak, and windows clap, and night's foul bird,
> Rook'd in the spire, screams loud.
> I'll hear no more; it makes one's blood run chill." *

With due deference to Blair, and due admiration of his verses, I think he might have spared the last of the above lines. The sounds he enumerates are gloomy enough, no doubt, but being perfectly natural and of frequent occurrence, are not capable of making "one's blood run chill."

The members of a family living in a solitary suburban house approachable only by a by-road close to a church-yard, were roused by an unaccountable noise from midnight sleep, left their beds, and huddled together in one room, while the master of the dwelling, pistol in hand, searched the premises. Though nothing suspicious was detected, the female servants could not be persuaded to return to their chambers, because, as no thief was found lurking about, it was clear "the house was haunted."

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* Blair's "Grave."

And to this day such a belief would have been cherished, had not the master been a man in whose mind no prejudice or absurd fear could for an instant exist—one whose clear and sagacious faculties are competent to the exposure of any fallacy, however plausible. The sound was heard on a subsequent night; and being resolved to detect its cause, which this gentleman suspected beforehand would turn out to be something very simple and very trivial, he ascertained at last that it proceeded from the rattling, in a sudden wind, of a Venetian blind hanging outside the window of an unoccupied room, and which the servants had neglected, week after week, to draw up and secure.

This discovery was resented by the gossips in the kitchen, who were actually disappointed at the ruin of so promising a story of a haunted house.

Servant-girls, indeed, are very industrious and very effectual propagators of wonderful stories. They delight in them: such tales constitute the food on which their minds exist; and they are angry with any one who should snatch them from a dark and "fearful joy," and place

them in the light of reason. They are of "unbounded stomach" in matters of credulity: a ghost or an omen gives the finest relish imaginable to their tea, and the most intense zest to their conversation: there are not impossibilities enough for their ever-ready faith: to them truth is an insipid thing. Life would lose all its charm if you should prove that gipsies and "cunning women" were ignorant and sordid impostors; and unfortunately a belief in such tricksters is not confined to the poor and uneducated, but extends itself to those who have received the advantage of careful nurture.

In May, 1844, a young lady drowned herself in the river Lea, at Bow, from despondency at something she had been told by a female fortune-teller in Goswell-street-road, whose accursed residence she had been in the habit of visiting for a considerable time. This fatal facility of belief, which had destroyed her faculties, inspired her with groundless terror, and driven her to the madness of self-murder, might have been derived from the early counsels of a servant-maid; for it is notorious that much ineradicable

mischief is instilled into the minds of children by domestics placed about them.

Any apparently unaccountable night-sound is immediately translated into a portent by the greater number of female servants. The constant falsification of these "omens" makes no difference in their belief: if the event, thus *foretold*, does *not* occur, they declare it *ought* to have occurred. They resemble the "sage," of whose fantastical speculations some friend said, "The facts, my dear fellow, do not agree with your theory." "Don't they?" replied the enthusiast: "then so much the worse for the facts."

It is painful to speak thus of any class; and no doubt numerous worthy exceptions might be found; but most persons will agree that the censure may generally be justified. Want of education is at the root of the mischief. With the dense stupidity in which the majority of girls who go out to service are brought up, is combined a large portion of cunning. Some of them have been known to make startling noises in the dead of night, purely to give birth to an awful story; and the best of the thing is, that

in an incredibly short space of time *they themselves believe the very marvels they invent.*

The present writer recollects being, a few years ago, roused out of his sleep, one wintry morning, about three o'clock, by a violent knocking at the lower part of his house—a rather lonely dwelling, two miles from town. Had this noise proceeded from the front door, it is probable he would have turned on his pillow and gone again to sleep, under a notion that the knocking originated in those facetious gentlemen —adherents of "spring-heeled Jack"—who, in their cups, like their predecessors, the Mohocks, wittily disturbed the nocturnal quiet of families, and thought it good manly sport to terrify women and children. But as the sounds came from the back of the building opening on a garden into which access was not easy, any suspicion of these heroic revellers was at once dismissed.

He instantly jumped out of bed; and while descending the stairs, the stunning and threatening sounds were repeated. Going to the garden-door, he vociferated, "Who's there?"

No answer was given, and perfect silence returned. The servant slept in a room adjoining

the kitchen. Thither the writer went, and speaking from outside, inquired if she had heard the loud knocking.

"O yes, sir," she replied; "and I am frightened to death."

"Well," added he, "keep where you are, and I'll soon find out what's the matter."

He then opened the house-door, passed into the road, and, for once in his life, found a policeman at the very moment he was wanted.

"Have you seen any one within the last five minutes go out of these premises?" he asked.

"No, sir," answered the man.

"Nor any suspicious characters about the road?"

"No."

"We have just been disturbed by a violent noise. Come in, and go with me over the premises."

The constable unmasked his light; and every part of the garden, outhouses, kitchen, &c., were examined, but no intruder was found; nor any print of footsteps on the garden-mould. It was clear that no human being had entered the gate, or climbed the walls. But the loud knocking! What could account for *that?*

"I never expected we should see any body," said the man, after the search had been completed; "because thieves don't make noises when they go a-housebreaking."

"I ought to have thought of that myself," observed the writer; "but I was too suddenly roused out of a heavy sleep."

By this time the servant had dressed herself, and though told by her master to keep her bed, had come forth.

"Did *you* hear these knockings, young woman?" asked the officer.

"Yes, yes," answered she; "and never shall I forget them!"

The man looked her hard in the face. "Do you ever walk in your sleep?" said he.

"No, never!" replied the girl, emphatically.

This occasioned a new train of ideas in the writer's mind, who, dismissing the policeman, went again to bed, and slept uninterruptedly till daylight.

In a few days, the girl, who had been but a short time in the family, gave her mistress warning, saying the place was too lonely for her; and, at last, it was ascertained that, either being

scared at the dead silence of the night, so different from the crowded houses of London in which she had hitherto lived, and where perfect stillness never comes, or else anxious to create a wondering sensation, she had left her room, determined to bring some evidence of life about her by inflicting heavy blows with some instrument on the garden-door. That her master should have been so successfully hoaxed was, doubtless, an additional source of enjoyment.

Here was another tale of mystery crushed in the bud.

It has been observed, in old houses especially, that the timbers, from swelling and contracting, according to the state of the weather, will cause sudden, and, when heard at night, inexplicable noises. Furniture will produce the same effects, and so, occasionally, will the backs of stoves during the process of cooling, when the fire is out. All these, from time to time, for want of a little sensible investigation, have received wondrous interpretations, and been sources of terror.

But the most dismal of all night-noises—one of which the ghostly import is fully believed by

scores of unreflecting persons—but which is among the most innocent things in the world, is the "Death-watch." This curious sound has been held to announce the speedy decease of some inmate of the house wherein it is heard; and overwhelming is the dread, and torturing are the heart-throes, occasioned by the ticking of this supposed fatal watch. Though natural history long ago declared that these sounds proceed from a little harmless insect, hundreds of believers still exist who refuse to be persuaded that the noise is not prophetic of the charnel-house. Even those who have been brought to credit the fact that the ticking in question is made by an insect, are reluctant all at once to abandon a gloomy notion, and therefore affirm that the sound is still significant of death, for, say they, it comes from a spider in the act of dying, and when the ticks cease, the creature is dead.

Many intelligent persons are aware that this latter opinion is equally erroneous with the former; but as others may lack such correct information, it might not be altogether superfluous to state that the insect in question is *not* a spider, but "the *pediculus* of old wood, a species of

termes belonging to the order *aptera* in the Linnæan system." It is very diminutive.

There are two kinds of death-watches. One is very different in appearance from the other. The former only beats seven or eight quick strokes at a time: the latter will beat some hours together more deliberately and without ceasing. This ticking, instead of having anything to do with death, is a joyous sound, and as harmless as the cooing of a dove.

It is to be regretted that Science, to which we owe so many blessings,—so much of health both bodily and mental,—should have made an inconsiderate compromise with Superstition, by naming this lively and harmless little creature, "*Mortisaga.*"

Burton demonstrates the delusions of those who affirm that they see supernatural visions, and hear supernatural noises:

"That they see and hear so many phantasms, chimeras, visions, noises, &c. as Fienus hath discoursed at large in his book of Imagination, and Lavater *de Spectris*, their corrupt phantasy makes them see and hear that which is indeed neither heard nor seen. They that much

fast, or *want sleep*, as melancholy or sick men commonly do, see visions; or such as are weak-sighted, very timorous by nature, mad, distracted, earnestly seek. *Sabini quod volunt somniant*, as the saying is; they dream of that they desire."

Again: "As Mercatus proves, by reason of inward vapours, and humours from blood, choler, &c. diversely mixed, they apprehend and see outwardly, *as they suppose*, divers images, which indeed *are not*. As they that drink wine think all runs round, when it is in their own brain, so it is with these men; the fault and cause is *inward*. As Galen affirms, mad men and such as are near death, *quas extra se videre putant imagines, intra oculos habent*, tis in their brain, that which seems to be before them; as a concave glass reflects solid bodies. * * Weak sight and a vain persuasion withal, may effect as much, and second causes concurring, as an oar in the water makes a refraction, and seems bigger, bended double, &c. The thickness of the air may cause such effects; or any object *not well discerned in the dark*, fear and phantasy will suspect to be a ghost, a devil, &c.

Quod nimis miseri timent, hoc facile credunt, we are apt to believe and mistake in such cases. Marcellus Donatus brings in a story out of Aristotle of one Antepharon who supposed he saw, wheresoever he was, his own image in the air, as in a glass. Vitellio hath such another instance of a familiar acquaintance of his, that, *after the want of three or four nights' sleep,* as he was riding by a river-side, saw another riding with him, and using all such gestures as he did; but *when more light appeared, it vanished.* Eremites and anchorites have frequently such absurd visions and revelations by reason of *much fasting and bad diet.* Many *are deceived by legerdemain,* as Reginald Scot hath well shewed in his book of the discovery of witchcraft."

Again: "The hearing is as frequently deluded as the sight, from the same causes almost; as he that hears bells, will make them sound what he list." [Whittington to wit]. "'As the fool thinketh, so the bell clinketh.' Theophilus in Galen thought he heard music from vapours which made his ears sound, &c. * * Cardan mentioneth a woman that still supposed she heard the devil call her, and speaking

to her: she was a painter's wife in Milan. Many such illusions and voices proceed from a corrupt imagination."*

The present writer recollects having read some years ago in Hone's "Year Book," a story to the following effect: Peter Priestly, a gravestone-cutter of Wakefield in Yorkshire, desiring to finish the epitaph on a certain tomb-stone, left his home one evening for the church in which he was permitted occasionally to work. Having arrived there, he set down his lantern and, lighting another candle, resumed his rather gloomy task. Midnight approached and still his work was not completed. On a sudden, a strange noise, as of the utterance of "hiss!" or "hush!" startled him. He looked round, but nothing was seen—not even a bat or owl flitting athwart the upper darkness.

Recovering from his surprise, Peter concluded he had been deceived, and plied his chisel with fresh vigour. In a few minutes, however, the ominous word was again audible. He once more searched, but in vain, for the cause of so uncom-

* "Anatomy of Melancholy," Partition 1, Section iii., Member 3.

mon a sound; and, being at length terrified, was about to quit the church, when a sense of duty withheld him, and he renewed his work, which was completed as the clock struck twelve. While with downcast head intently examining the epitaph he had cut, the dreadful word "hush!" came louder than ever on his ear. Peter was now fairly appalled. He concluded that he himself was summoned to the grave—that in fact he had been carving his own "Hic jacet." Tottering home, he went to bed, but could not sleep.

Next morning his wife, happening to observe his wig, exclaimed "O Peter! what hast thou been doing to burn all the hair off one side of thy wig?"

"Ah, God bless thee," vociferated the stonecutter, jumping out of bed, "thou hast cured me with that word."

The mysterious midnight sound was occasioned by the frizzling of Peter's wig as it accidentally came in contact with the candle while he bent over his work; and the discovery thus made, afforded many a jest and laugh.

MAUDE DOUGHTY:

A WITCH STORY.

I reserve my assent to Sir Thomas Brown's belief in witches till I meet with stronger motives to carry it. And I confess I doubt as much the efficacy of those Magical Rules he speaketh of, as of the finding out of mysteries by the courteous *Revelation of Spirits.*—Sir KENELM DIGBY, 1642.

MAUDE DOUGHTY.

CHAPTER I.

> Three rising days and two descending nights
> Have changed the face of heaven and earth by turns,
> But brought no kind vicissitude to *them*.
> *Their* state is still the same, with hunger pinch'd.
>
> DRYDEN.

DARKNESS hung in the cope of heaven like a huge pall: the wind rushed about as in a frenzy, stunning the hearer with its mad clamour, and tearing up great trees by the roots. In this elemental whirl there was no lack of rain, which now descended perpendicularly, and then, uniting its drops into one wide sheet of water, drove with horizontal force against whatever stood in its way.

It was a wild and dismal night. Mansions of rich men were able to dash back, with haughty defiance, the giant assaults made against them; but woe betide the dwellers in squalid huts! Every blast threatened to bury them beneath their own walls—every mighty rush of water from the clouds, to drown them.

In an exposed situation on the edge of a forest in the west of England, stood, about the commencement of last century, a wretched tenement rudely built of refuse fragments of stone from a neighbouring quarry, and covered by rotten thatch. Dilapidated as was its exterior condition, the interior was still worse. The door, which alone shielded the inmates from external air, (for it opened at once into the room,) was nearly off its hinges, and, even when closed, showed some awkward apertures between itself and the lintel. The floor had originally been paved with red tiles; but some of these were now broken, and others had sunk below the level, forming little reservoirs of wet mud; the ceiling was cracked and mildewed by damp, which found its way through the sodden thatch, and the walls were in a like humid condition. A truckle bed,

a crazy deal table, one or two rickety chairs, and a corner cupboard, constituted the entire furniture.

In this forlorn hovel sat, on the night just described, three persons,—a mother, a daughter, and a son. They were cowering silently over a wood fire, buried in their own thoughts, yet every now and then shifting their looks towards the door and window as the turbulent gusts came thundering against them, making the whole tenement stagger. But dangerous as might be the position of these poor tenants, they had no choice but to maintain it. Better here than out of doors might they

"Bide the pelting of this pitiless storm."

Maude Doughty, the mother, was prematurely old, bent, shrivelled, and hag-like in appearance. Still, in spite of her patched and parti-coloured wrappings, there was a certain expression about her of something superior to other women in her class of life: such a woman in the ancient world, might have been taken for the pale and haggard Sibyl of Cumæ. Her father had been a poor schoolmaster. Maude, therefore, lacked not the

advantages of reading and writing, and in her youth, during intervals of household labour, had contrived to lay up no small store of book-knowledge, and so assist her parent.

Her mind being of a vigorous nature, a life of unvaried misfortune had strengthened rather than enfeebled her faculties. In the midst of her troubles, she kept a keen eye on all by which she was surrounded: misery taught her to speculate on the unaccountable freaks of fortune; but here Maude's philosophy was at fault. Like the rest of the world, she could never clearly understand why meanness and want of principle should so often fare better than self-respect and honesty. And, in truth, this is one of the great puzzles of our existence. The marvel of it, the bitter mystery, the numerous and palpable instances of thriving vice and starving virtue, extorted from Cowley (as conscientious and pious a Christian as ever lived) the following remarkable and melancholy reflection:—

"I love and commend," says he, "a true, good fame, because it hath the shadow of virtue; not that it doth any good to the body which it accompanies, but 'tis an efficacious shadow, and,

like that of St. Peter, cures the diseases of others. The best kind of glory, no doubt, is that which is reflected from honesty, such as was the glory of Cato and Aristides; but it was harmful to them both, and is seldom beneficial to any man whilst he lives. What it is to him after his death I cannot say, because I love not philosophy merely notional and conjectural, and no man who has made the experiment has been so kind as to come back to inform us."

Had Cowley not been in a desponding mood when he wrote this, (a mood induced, no doubt, by the base ingratitude with which Charles the Second met his faithfulness and long services,) he might have discovered in the temporary triumph of duplicity and knavish selfishness, and the frequent misery of single-hearted probity, a powerful argument for, instead of against, the doctrine of a blessed retrospection of worldly virtue in a future state, where undeserved sufferings would be rewarded. He would not have doubted that things would find their proper level in another sphere of existence. To injure a belief in this, might be equivalent to offering a premium for heartless tricks, and circumventing stratagems, to which

many persons are prone enough already. It is clear that in this world, well-meaning and upright actions will not do, unless dashed with a certain portion of cunning to perceive and defeat the plots of others — defensive, not *offensive* cunning.

In this sort of artifice, and, indeed, in artifice of any kind, Maude Doughty was singularly deficient. Wretchedness had sharpened her faculties, and taught her to discern the essentials of things apart from their pretences. But even knowledge, thus painfully acquired, had not brought craftiness along with it: she remained utterly incapable of advancing herself by injuring another. So she and poverty had for years been familiar companions; and the old woman, yielding to what seemed inevitable, had made up her mind to go down to the grave with this gaunt mate by her side.

Far otherwise was it with Amie, her daughter, and with Caleb, her son. The girl was twenty years of age, and the young man two-and twenty. Caleb worked much, and was paid little; while Amie could get nothing to do, except during a month or two in summer, when

she toiled in the hot fields at such agricultural labour as is commonly given to women. But strive as they might, they could not earn enough for the decent subsistence of themselves and mother; so the young folks became impatient under their hardships, and resolved to "better themselves," as the phrase is, by any means they could devise—honest means, if possible; if not, to improve their condition, at all events.

Caleb's temper was fiery and rash. To use a familiar expression, "he feared neither man nor devil:" he had a head to plot and a hand to execute; and Amie's bosom was no stranger to ambition, especially when she saw the more fortunate country girls wending their way, on a Sunday, towards church, with smart gowns and flaring ribbons. Then would she often sigh, and say to herself, "Why cannot *I* make a like show?" She had frequently talked over this matter with Caleb; but no feasible scheme had ever presented itself.

On the night, however, at which this narrative commences, a sudden thought darted into Caleb's brain. He clutched at it. How could it have happened that so bright an idea had never

before lighted up his mind? It must now have been inspired by the long silence into which such desperate weather as then raged around them had striken his mother and sister. But how should he fashion his scheme into words? Amie, he knew, would not mind it; but his mother! how should he propose it to *her?*

He mused awhile amidst the furious howling of the wind and the dash of ceaseless rain. In spite of the blazing wood-fire, which, because a forest was at hand, wanted not fuel, Amie looked pale and cold. As for Maude, a hard life of sixty years had so shrivelled her as to put it out of the power of outward influences to make her look unsightlier than she always was. Nothing could appear more forlorn than the whole group, destitute as they were of those comforts which might assuage the raging inclemency of the night. They had no cheering liquor, and very little food.

"Mother," at length said Caleb, approaching his subject by degrees—"mother, we are very miserable!"

"Yes, indeed, my boy," answered Maude; "hunger and danger are our portion; and we

have nothing wherewith to meet them but patience."

"The worst helpmate in the world," rejoined Caleb. "Patience is a cheat, invented to gull poor people; and that's the reason why comfortable men preach it to us. Now I'm for turning patience out of doors. Them that like to suffer, *may* suffer; and great folks will look on, and give 'em as many words of praise as they may fancy. But I want something more substantial than empty encouragement, and, from this night for'ard, I mean to try and get it. If we could go to sleep all winter, like the bats, 'twould be another matter, only we can't. Look at sister, how she pines! Why, she'll be a downright old woman afore she's five and twenty, if we go on much longer in this manner. Our life *shall* be changed!"

"I like your resolution, Caleb," said old Maude, mournfully; "but how will you bring it to bear? Every path to better fortune is closed against us. What can such crawling creatures as we do? We have no decent raiment, no money, no friends. We are born paupers, and paupers we must remain. No,

no, Caleb; there is no hope for us. We must be patient, I tell you."

"I won't be patient, mother," returned Caleb, striking the table with his broad fist. "Here we are, in a crazy old cabin that can hardly shelter us from the wind and rain. The very cattle are better off, for they have weather-tight stalls, and plenty to eat. Feed me first, mother, and then we can prate of patience, which is poor victuals for an empty stomach. Is there anything in the cupboard?"

"No."

"Then let us talk of something else than patience," pursued Caleb. "Amie, what do you say?"

The girl looked up in her brother's face with a searching aspect. She could not conjecture what new scheme was working in his mind; and she was reluctant to speak in direct opposition to what had fallen from her mother.

"Why, Caleb," said she, in answer to his appeal, "how can I say anything about it till I know what you are thinking of? Tell us your plan; and then both mother and I can judge of it."

But the young man was not ready to do this at the moment. He must, first of all, prepare the way. It would never do to disclose his scheme abruptly.

"It is something," said he, evasively, "that every one of us can take a part in. All I can say just now is, that I'm sick at heart of this half-alive half-dead kind of life."

"So am I, and so is Amie, I'm sure," observed old Maude. "But how are we to get free of it? I cannot guess what your notion is, Caleb; but recollect, my boy, that nothing dishonest will help us. Besides its wickedness, dishonesty is the worst kind of folly,—the most expensive and extravagant thing in the world. It is throwing out a herring to catch a sprat, and nine times out of ten the sprat is not caught, though the herring is always lost. Though I say this, Caleb, I don't think you mean anything wrong. So, as Amie observes, tell us your plan at once. Talking will do us all good, and keep off our thoughts from this mad weather."

"Mad weather!" echoed the young man. "Yes, it's mad indeed. A pretty night I'm

like to have of it in the loft, on that mouldy straw, when you and sister are a-bed."

This was said, not so much out of any actual repugnance to his comfortless dormitory, (for he was too well used to it,) as with a design to press more heavily on his mother's mind a sense of their destitution, which must be endured in all its bitterness throughout the coming winter.

"We'll all sit up by the fire to-night," said Maude. "Luckily, we've plenty of wood."

"But we can't sit up by the fire every night," rejoined Caleb. "I tell you, mother, we must take the bull by the horns. We must get money. We are three, and must all work together, and with a will. We mustn't mind what folks say, or what folks think, but do our duty to ourselves, —and that is, to get meat and drink, warm clothes, and warm lodgings."

"Would to God we could do so!" exclaimed Maude. "You talk, Caleb, about all three of us working together. You know, my dear, that I, for one, was never slack at work when I had the power; but what am I to do *now?* I am too feeble, too old to work, however much I may wish it."

"That's it, mother," returned the young man eagerly. "That's the very thing we want; you're coming to the point now."

"What point?" demanded Maude. "What use can possibly be made of a decrepid old woman?"

Caleb had now got into what he called "the right line." He was relieved at feeling that he had so far approached the subject. Laying on the table a pipe he had been smoking, he drew near to his mother, fixed his eyes on her withered countenance, and modulated his voice, as well as he could, into a persuasive tone.

"Now, mother," said he, "you must hear me fairly through, and not burst out into contradictions afore your time. I mean no harm to man, woman, or child. All I want is to get a little money to make you, and Amie, and me, more comfortable."

"Go on, my boy," said Maude, whose curiosity was fairly awakened.

"You have heard, I suppose," resumed Caleb, with a careless tone, "how Squire Babstock has been robbed o' late?"

The old woman started at the very mention of

robbery. "I *have* heard this," gasped she; "it is the common talk. What then?"

"Nothing; only I think I know who did it," replied the youg man, significantly.

"Well."

"That is, mind me," pursued Caleb, "I don't know it of my own knowledge; but Dick Pittock——"

"Dick Pittock!" echoed Maude, interrupting her son; "I don't like Dick Pittock, and I wish you had never seen him."

"Dick's as good a fellow as ever drew breath," said Caleb, vindicating his friend's character with all the undiscerning and ungovernable impulse of a young man. "Dick knows a thing or two, and always has his eyes about him."

"If Dick knows who is the thief," observed old Maude, "why don't he go at once to the squire, and give information? *We* have no concern with it."

"Dick go to the squire! That would never do at all," exclaimed Caleb. "There's a bad feeling abroad about poor Dick, which he don't deserve. The squire wouldn't hear what he had to say; the more so when he came to peach

agen a man that's high up in the squire's household."

"That may be," said Maude; "but you know it's nothing to us."

"I tell you it *is* to us," replied the young man. "This is the long and the short of it, mother—*we* must declare who the thief is."

"*We!*" echoed Maude; "not for all the world! We know nothing of the matter; and if we said what was'nt true, we should be hunted out of house and home."

"A pretty home, forsooth!" said Caleb, sneeringly.

"Better at any rate," retorted Maude, "than the dripping forest, or the bleak moor."

CHAPTER II.

Why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair?
MACBETH.

"MOTHER," said Amie, who had listened with curiosity and attention to the foregoing discourse —"mother, hadn't we better hear Caleb out? He was just going to tell us everything, when you stopped him."

"Well then, Caleb," muttered the old woman, "as Amie wishes it, go on."

Caleb felt that the moment for being explicit had arrived. He reckoned on his sister's support, and therefore dashed at once boldly into the matter, saying—

"We must gull the squire, and pretend to discover the thief by witchcraft. There now,

mother!—won't that bring us money for the present job, and keep us in pay for services to come?"

Maude rose from her chair, clasped her hands wildly, paced restlessly about the room, and exclaimed—

"Is it come to *this?* Is *this* to be the end of a life of struggling want? Is your mother, because she is old and ugly, to pass to the scaffold, that she might insure to her children a brief season of relief?"

"God forbid!" exclaimed Amie and Caleb together.

"A witch!" ejaculated Maude, not noticing what her children had said—"a witch! a wretch that more than any other thing is loathed by her fellow-creatures! Am I to be acquainted with *this* misery? If there is in the path of life one shadow blacker than another, 'tis that which falls on a witch. Children, dear children, you whom I have nursed, and nourished, and tended many a weary hour, banish this desperate thought! Let us look our sufferings in the face, and fight with them; anything is better than daring the dreadful persecution that witchcraft will bring upon us."

Amie trembled, but Caleb held to his purpose. "You don't consider, mother," said he, "that our sham sorcery is to do good, not harm; to restore a man's property, not to rob him of it."

"Ay, good to the squire," returned Maude; "but what sort of good shall we do him whom we accuse? Will not he and his friends hate us with a burning hate? Will he not set yelling mobs to hunt us? Will he not denounce us to a terrible law?"

"The squire will protect us," said Caleb, moodily.

"Not he," retorted the mother. "When his turn is served he'll forsake us; yea, see us die on the gallows, and then return home and carouse with his companions. I know something more than you, Caleb, about the monstrous and selfish ingratitude of men. Torture and death are in your scheme, my boy. Think no more of it."

The young man, though he felt at first that he should have some difficulty to encounter, did not expect so passionate and energetic an opposition as his mother had made. For a time he was thoroughly baffled; but such firm hold had his

plan taken on his mind, that he continued to brood over it.

There was silence awhile, or rather a cessation of any human voice, for the elemental riot was as loud as ever.

At length, Caleb said, "I am sorry you take it up in this way, mother, because, you know, you wont be a *real* witch."

"A *real* witch!" echoed Maude. "There never was such a thing since her of Endor. Fraud has tempted some to profess it; terror has driven others into acknowledging it. Many a destitute, forlorn, persecuted, old and ugly woman, (such as I am,) has been tortured into confessing what she never thought to do; and some of weak minds have been so bewildered by questions and accusations which they could not understand, as to believe they must actually have been in a covenant with Satan, and in the madness of pleading guilty to that absurdity have perished."

"Dear mother," cried Amie, with tears in her eyes, "you must not be placed in such danger. I would die first, inch by inch, of starvation."

"I have known," continued Maude, "more

instances of the stupid and brutal persecution of witches than most people. I have been in court when many poor creatures were tried for this supposed offence, and seen the wretched, ignorant, trembling prisoners staring at judge and jury and crowd, with vacant looks, scarcely understanding what was going on, and knowing nothing clearly except that they were brought there on their road to a violent death. I was at Bury St. Edmund's, about forty years ago, and saw Amy Duny and Rose Cullender tried for witchcraft, before Judge Hale. The chief thing against them was their ill-favoured countenances. Their beseeching looks for mercy were held to be fiendish glances; and one of the witnesses, a Norwich physician, of the name of Sir Thomas Brown, who was thought to be a very wise man, sealed their doom by giving it as his opinion that the poor old women had made a bargain with the devil. In vain did they declare their innocence. Everybody testified against them—no one defended them; so they were hanged."

"Horrible!" ejaculated Maude's daughter.

"Yes," resumed her mother, "and worse cruelties have been done out of a court of justice

than in it. Oh, my children, I should curdle your blood if I was to tell you what I've been present at on village greens, by the side of rivers, and in other spots meant by God for the comfort and recreation of His creatures; when strong men have been turned into fiends on purpose to torment the helpless and aged."*

"What you say is very true, mother; I make no doubt of it," observed Caleb. "And therefore I give up all notion of taking up with witchcraft for a constancy, or of remaining here. Still how are we to make out our living for this long winter that's a-coming? or how are we to keep this rotten old ruin over our heads? It has had a pretty good shaking to-night. I tell'ee what, mother—if you knew how constantly and

* As late as 1823, an old woman, named Anne Burges, living at Wivilscombe, in Somersetshire, was cut and hacked in a dreadful manner, on the supposition of her being a witch; and, in 1751, long after the removal from our statute-book of the disgraceful penal act of James I., against witches, Ruth Osborne, aged seventy, was dragged about in a pond, by a brutal crowd, at Mariston Green, in Hertfordshire, till she was drowned. The law had ceased its atrocities; but the besotted malignancy of the populace was prolonged.

how deeply the squire was robbed a'most day after day, and could only consider how much he'd pay to find out the thief, which I know I can get out of Dick Pittock, let alone what I suspect myself, I think you wouldn't object to do a bit of honest mummery for once—only for once, mind—and then, with money in our pockets, we could shift to some town in another part of the country, where we should have a better chance than in this dreary cottage away from other human beings."

"Caleb, Caleb!" answered Maude, "I wonder how you can wish to see your mother banned as a witch."

"But you an't banned *now*, are you?" demanded the young man.

"No; why should I be?" returned Maude.

"Well, then," pursued Caleb, "I can tell you that folks down yonder in the village take you for a witch, and so they have a long time."

Now, whether this was fact, or a sudden invention of the young man as a means to gain his point, is uncertain. Be this as it may, its effect on Maude was piteous to behold. She shook like one in an ague. She panted and

gasped, and pressed her hands against her forehead, and tried to speak; but for a time, her tongue seemed incapable of utterance. At length, she said—

"This is bitter news, indeed. Is it because long trouble has bent me before my time, and because I live in a lonely hut, which I wouldn't do if I could get a better—is it because my face is wrinkled and ugly that fools call me a witch? Alas, I am indeed cursed!"

"And therefore, mother," interposed Caleb, "if I was you, I'd turn the tables on 'em, and have some of the profit as well as the disgrace."

"So I would," said Amie, swelling with indignation at the stigma cast on her mother; "'specially," added she, "as Caleb says we may win money enough by one trick to get far away from such savages, and live in a merry town."

"You know not what you wish, my children," exclaimed Maude. "If I am to pretend to be a witch, as sure as God is in heaven, Amie will also be taken for one—Amie, my good girl Amie!"

"I don't fear them, mother," said the girl.

"Even if you were to run any risk, which I don't think, I'll be by your side."

"And am I," resumed Maude, "to see my poor child, in the flower of her days, hooted by ruffian men and women, torn by dogs, dragged through miry ponds, cursed for a witch, taken before cruel judges, and hanged by the neck till she is dead? Oh, Amie, my darling, woe is me!"

So saying, she threw herself upon her daughter's neck, and twined her arms around her with so strict an embrace, that it seemed as if those loving links were riveted there for ever.

Caleb was touched at the sight; but the golden prospect glittered too temptingly to be renounced. "You forget, mother," said he, "that I've a stout heart and a strong arm. There's not a man in the village would dare to wrong you with me by your side."

"Was Dick Pittock the prompter of this daring scheme?" asked Maude, with a searching glance at her son.

"Dick? No, it came into my head to-night, all of a sudden," replied Caleb. "Dick knows nothing about it."

"Well then, my children," ejaculated the old

woman, mournfully, "as you both seem to wish it, and as the prospect of the coming winter terrifies you, for your sakes, I consent; and may God protect us! Protect us, did I say? Alas! He never protects deceit. I should rather have hoped he will forgive us. But I consent—I consent!"

And with these words she sank in her chair and swooned. In default of any other restorative, Amie bathed her mother's temples with cold water, while Caleb looked on almost aghast. The storm was still raving and howling about them.

While Amie was busy in her tender offices, Caleb thought he heard a knocking at the door; but he was not certain, because every external sound was swallowed up by the roaring of the wind. He listened intently.

"Are you all asleep?" bawled a voice outside.

Caleb started to his feet. Could any one have overheard their conference? and was punishment so sudden? The young man seized a bludgeon, and planted himself in the door-way.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

"*Me*," answered the voice.

"Who is it, I say?"

"Dick Pittock."

Caleb opened the door, and Dick was fairly blown in by a sudden gust.

"I didn't know your voice, Dick," said the young man; "the wind makes such a blessed pother."

"I wanted to see you, Caleb," observed Dick; "and precious wet I've got in coming. But never mind; here's something to warm us," he added, producing a bottle of rum. "Halloo! What's the matter with the old woman?"

"She's a little shivery with the weather, that's all," replied Caleb.

"Then a drop out of the bottle will set her to rights," returned Pittock. "And pretty Amie, too; she looks rather queerish. Never mind; we'll all drink about, and be merry."

Maude, now partly restored, opened her eyes, but closed them again on seeing Pittock. She would not taste the spirit offered to her, neither would Amie.

"Well, then, Caleb and I must have a glass together," said Dick. "Here," continued he, "I've brought some tea and a loaf for breakfast to-morrow; for I know Caleb won't refuse me a

shake down on the straw in the loft to-night, 'specially as it's so blusterous out of doors. Well done, old railer!" he added, as a tremendous blast struck the cottage—"well done! Blow away! You're not a match for what's in this bottle. Drink Caleb; there's nothing else for it such a night. You and I must talk about a thing or two afore we part."

"And I've something to propose to you, Dick," responded the young man.

"Not to-night," rejoined Pittock. "No business to-night. Let us drink, and get warm, and defy the weather. If 'twasn't that your mother seems poorly, we'd try our voices agen the wind in a lusty song. As 'tis, we must be content with consoling the inner man, and then to rest. We wont keep you and Amie up long, Mrs. Doughty."

CHAPTER III.

If you look to be released, as my wits have took pains to work it, and all means wrought to farther it, besides to put crowns in your purse, to make you a man of better hopes, and a commander of rich fools, which is safer than highways, heaths, or rabbit-groves, and yet a far better booty,—you must conjure. Your greatest thieves are never hanged; for why? they're wise, and cheat within doors.—WIDOW OF WATLING STREET.

CONTRARY to Dick's promise, he and Caleb, tempted by hot and strong potations, sat up very late; and not until the storm had spent its fury, did they betake themselves to their straw beds.

It was now about one o'clock in the morning; but, exhausted as old Maude felt by the emotion she had undergone, and though Amie could

hardly keep her eyes open, neither of them would lie down. More wood was heaped on the fire; and, holding her daughter's hand, as if she feared to lose her by some approaching calamity, Maude sat in silent reverie. The girl, too, was busy with her own thoughts, which now had no interruption, because the threatening wind had blown itself out, and there was no longer any noise of rain. Profound quiet took place of the elemental roar. Presently the rays of a moon, not long past its full, shone strongly through the bare window-panes. Our watchers felt somewhat comforted by the light, and by the general peacefulness of nature, especially welcome after the recent turmoil.

Oppressed by drink and fatigue, Caleb and Dick slept soundly. Nothing was heard, except now and then the fall of a few leaves from some trees close by. Many of these autumnal deposits had been wind-driven under the eaves of Maude's hovel, where they lay free from wet; they no longer whirled about in rustling eddies; but, though noiseless in themselves, they would become instant agents of sound should anything touch them.

Had Maude and Amie been images of stone, instead of human beings, their attitudes could hardly have been more unchanging. Weariness, no less than thoughtful abstraction, kept them fixed. All on a sudden, however, Maude shifted her position; the expression of her face changed; and she bent her head towards the window.

"What is the matter, mother?" asked Amie. "Why do you look so anxious?"

"Hush, my dear!" replied the old woman. "Listen! do you hear nothing?"

"No. What is it? You frighten me."

"Some foot is treading on the dead leaves outside," pursued Maude. "Who, in the name of Heaven, can be about us at such an hour as this?"

"Hadn't I better go and rouse Caleb?" gasped Amie.

"Not for the world!" returned old Maude. "Oh, Amie, my dear, I would rather both Caleb and Dick Pittock were out of the house than in it, at this moment."

"Why, mother?"

"I cannot tell you now," replied she. "Per-

haps my fear is not reasonable. There again! Hark to the rustle of the leaves!"

"I hear it now, plainly enough," responded Amie, "and will see who it is. Don't stop me, mother. We had better know the worst at once."

So saying, the girl crouched down beneath the window, and brought her eyes on a level with the sill. This manœuvre was not unperceived by him who was prying outside. By the strong fire-light, he saw the crown of Amie's head as she planted it against the window; and, being conscious of detection, at once hurried away, though not before the girl had, in her turn, ascertained his identity as he stood full in the moon's ray.

"He's off, mother!" said she, rising to her feet.

"Did you see him plainly, Amie?" demanded Maude.

"Yes," responded her daughter; "and, what's more, I know who he is."

"Tell me, Amie—tell me at once."

"What will you say, mother," returned the girl, "when you find that Mister Yare has been hovering about our dwelling?"

"Mister Yare!" echoed Maude. "What Nat Yare, of the great house?"

"He, and no other," replied Amie.

"If you are sure of this," pursued the old woman, "some dreadful mischief is afoot, depend on't. You heard what Caleb said, about Yare's master having been robbed."

"Yes; what then?"

"Why Dick Pittock is here. Don't you remember what Caleb said about Dick knowing who had robbed the squire, and that the thief was high up in the squire's household? Caleb will be ruined, I'm sure of it, by keeping company with Pittock. I've advised him against it time out of mind. But there is no curing the wilfulness of some young men. How does Dick Pittock earn his living? Nobody knows. My poor boy will not mend his fate by listening to this man. We get on pretty well—that is, we earn enough to keep soul and body together, in spring, summer, and autumn: it is only winter that pinches us; and, God knows, I would willingly brave the dead season, and count every week that brings us nearer to work, than seek relief in such schemes as Caleb just now pro-

posed, and which I am convinced he would never have thought of, but for his intimacy with Pittock. Mischief is brewing. Mister Yare, who never came near our house before, now lurks suspiciously about our window, in November, at two o'clock in the morning. I am unhappy, very unhappy, Amie, and very much terrified, too—God help me!"

"I think, mother, you look at things too seriously," said Amie. "We have never known any wrong of poor Caleb. He loves us both, and only wants to see us more comfortable."

"Yes, yes," responded Maude; "but it is this very anxiety that I fear will lead him into trouble. Nothing but honest work will benefit him or us. It is not to be done by deceitful scheming."

Thus talking, and thus desponding, Maude and her daughter wore the gloomy hours away. At length, the white dawn shivered in the east, when Amie, expecting the appearance of her brother, and his friend, made the kettle boil, and laid the table for breakfast. Caleb and Dick came down at eight o'clock, and found everything ready for the morning meal, which,

though it was better than any our poor family had for months enjoyed, passed uncomfortably. Both men and women were taciturn, and ill at ease.

When breakfast was finished, Maude and Amie left the cottage, partly because they did not like Pittock's company, and partly to refresh themselves in the open air, after their vigil. Being thus left alone, Caleb and his friend were free to discuss their projects.

Even had nothing more been against Dick than his appearance, Mistress Doughty might have been excused for disliking him. Pittock, truly, was an ill-looking fellow. His complexion was sallow, bloated, and unwholesome, betokening habitual intemperance: his black hair hung in tangled masses; his nose was broad and flat, hardly breaking the outline of his cheeks; and the obliquity of his eyes gave a peculiarly sinister expression to his countenance. Though slovenly, he was anti-rustical in his dress; and altogether, he looked more like a squalid town ruffian, than one who dwelt in villages. In spite, however, of so unprepossessing an exterior, he was a chosen companion of Caleb, over whom he had an entire influence.

"Now Dick," said young Doughty, "as we are alone, let us hear what you have to say."

"I have talked with you, Caleb," returned Pittock, "about the frequent robberies at the squire's house, and have hinted my guess as to the thief."

"I bear it in mind," responded his companion, "'specially as you pointed to the butler, Mister Yare."

"Why who else can it be?" demanded Pittock.

"I don't know," replied Caleb. "But what grounds have you for such a belief?"

"Grounds enough," rejoined Dick. "Hasn't he the command of all his master's plate?"

"Yes; but it don't follow, you know, that he steals it. I think with you, Dick; but let us give every man fair play. Up to this time, Nat Yare has had a good character; and though I'm not the better for him, other poor people, hereabout, speak well of him."

"That's nothing," said Pittock. "Any rogue can get plenty of witnesses to give him a good character. I know much about Nathaniel Yare

—he's the thief, depend on't. But 'twould be difficult to fix him. Squire Babstock would never believe it, in the common course of things; in which regard, we must do something *uncommon*. Now, a bit of magic (considering that the squire's belief has a wide swallow) would settle the matter. I've been thinking that your mother, who is old and 'cute——"

"Say no more, Dick," interposed Caleb. "I'm beforehand with you—you've hit my very thoughts; and what's more, I've settled it with the old woman."

"Settled what?" demanded Pittock.

"Why that she shall do duty as a witch, and pretend to find out the thief by sorcery."

Dick sprang from his chair to his feet, clasped his friend's hand, and in an exulting tone cried, "Caleb you have made a man of yourself! I did't think you had been so knowing; this will bring you plenty of rhino. You'll have no need to think of poaching, or any hazardous way of getting the needful. Trust to the old woman—to a mountebank trick or two, and a few words of gibberish, and we shall upset Mister Yare, (who would do me an ill turn if he could,) and

make your pocket ring, for the first time, with chink. I'll put the old woman up to the way of going to work."

"She doesn't need it," returned Caleb, with a sigh. "She knows more about witchcraft than most people. Poor mother!"

CHAPTER IV.

Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire.

SHAKSPEARE.

SIMON BABSTOCK was a simple-hearted well-meaning, but very ignorant west-country squire. He valued himself, as many empty-headed people do, on his powers of discrimination; and, in his capacity of magistrate, this self-conceit very often overcame the better impulses of his heart. That no man could gain upon him, was his constant boast: the fruit of this confidence showed itself in his being perpetually deceived. Real culprits escaped his *mittimus;* and innocent individuals were sometimes sent to jail, because his worship could not fathom the crafty designs of their persecutors.

The squire had a good income, and a fair mansion. It was his pride to maintain the old-fashioned country hospitality: he kept open-house; and, besides his liberality to guests of his own station, it was his order that no wayfarer who might present himself should be turned away without a slice of bread and meat, and a cup of ale. This, it must be confessed, brought a few questionable characters about his doors; and had not his butler, Nathaniel Yare, kept a sharp look out on what was going on, the other servants might have fallen into riotous habits and bad company. An unlimited access to strong beer, under the plea of dispensing it to casual applicants, might have kept the whole household in a state of drunkenness, had not Yare insisted on having the key of the beer-cellar in his own custody, so that a reference to him was always necessary. On this account the main body of domestics united in hating the butler, a feeling which was the more confirmed by Yare's reserved, not to say haughty, bearing.

To Dick Pittock, who was a great favourite with some of the servants, and who intruded himself rather too frequently at the hall, the

butler entertained a decided antipathy. Several articles of plate and other property had recently been missing; and as these were under the exclusive charge of Yare, suspicion fell on him, though none in the house dared hint their belief to the squire, who cherished a high opinion of his butler. Every possible manœuvre was adopted to detect the culprit; but Yare's caution and habitual reserve kept the inferior domestics at so great a distance, that they were not able to watch his proceedings, or prove anything against him.

On the night when this little narrative opens, Dick Pittock was at the hall. As the storm was so excessively violent, Dick had persuaded one of the grooms to let him sleep over the stable; and, with this comfortable prospect in view, he sat basking before the roaring kitchen fire, enjoying a mug of strong beer, and cutting jokes with the men and maids. It was now past ten o'clock. Dick was in glorious quarters. What cared he for the raging tempest? In proportion to the dismal weather out of doors, was the luxury within. Besides, something hot was in preparation for supper, a kind of property in

which Dick felt he should have a contingent interest.

It unluckily happened, however, that while Pittock was wrapped in these pleasing anticipations, Mister Yare walked into the kitchen. Whether he did so by pure accident, or with a design against Dick, is uncertain; but no sooner had the latter set eyes on the butler, and scanned the austere expression of his face, than Dick's hopes, one and all, began to totter.

"Mister Pittock," said the butler, in a very deliberate tone, "it is against the Squire's orders to have strangers in the house at this time of night."

"I hope, sir," responded Dick, submissively, "I hope you don't look upon *me* exactly in the light of a stranger."

"Why, you try to make yourself not one," retorted Yare, drily.

"Therefore," pursued Pittock, "I trust you don't mean to turn me out in this desperate weather."

"Turn you out!" echoed the butler; "why, what right have you here? You don't belong to the squire, I suppose."

"Certainly not," replied Dick; "only as the wind is enough to blow a man right away, and the rain to drown him, Tom the groom says I may sleep over the stable to-night."

"Does he?" returned Yare. Now *I* say you shall do no such thing; and we'll soon see who's most correct, Tom or I."

"Why, bless my soul, Mister Yare," ejaculated Pittock, "you wouldn't surely turn a Christian out into such a night as this?"

"You should stop at home, sir, in bad weather," retorted the butler. "It has been threatening all day. Why do you come here?"

This was a question which could not very conveniently be answered. Dick's resources were at fault; so he was silent.

"In ten minutes," resumed Yare, "I shall order the house to be fastened for the night. And it is my duty to see the servants' offices clear of intruders. Finish your beer, therefore, and be off."

This was a doleful mandate, more especially as the odour from the frying-pan was getting more and more savoury, and the wind and rain were increasing in violence. Then a night's rest

on the premises would involve a breakfast in the morning. How mortifying to be near such comforts and see them snatched away! Instead of merry kitchen company, he must have solitude; instead of a cherishing fire, he must face a withering storm; and in lieu of a dry nest, he must lie down in drenched clothes where and how he could. To give up these advantages without an effort, was impossible; so he made another appeal to the butler's commisseration. This, however, only roused Nat Yare's ire.

"Pittock," said he, "you will find I'm not to be trifled with. If you don't immediately leave this house, I'll fetch the squire himself to you—that's all!"

"Then I say, Yare," retorted Dick, who felt that all necessity for respectful demeanour was at an end, "you're an unfeeling dastard and no man, let alone a Christian. No fellow with an ounce of charity in him would turn a dog, much less a human being, out of doors on such a night. But I'm off; and it shall go hard but you rue this, master butler."

"I know well what I'm about, Dick Pittock,"

responded Yare. "I'm not quite such a fool as to suffer you to remain here a whole night."

Dick cast a contemptuous and threatening glance at the butler; took his hat, buttoned up his coat, and left the kitchen. Though the servants one and all, were in favour of their visitor, they dared not give expression to their feelings in presence of Mister Yare, so they witnessed the scene in silence. But when Pittock departed, one of the housemaids contrived to thrust a loaf into his hand, and another to give him a packet of tea. Dick had already managed by some means or other, to possess himself of a bottle of rum.

Making a merit, like many other men, of yielding to what was inevitable, Pittock encountered the wild storm, and proceeded, as we have seen, to Maude Doughty's hovel.

CHAPTER V.

> I'll prove thee, if thy deeds
> Will carry a proportion to thy words.
>
> BEN JONSON.

HAVING made certain arrangements with Dick, Caleb sallied forth with a view of encountering Squire Babstock in his morning walk, which, as the weather was very fine, (as it often is after the clouds, on a previous day, have emptied themselves, and the wind has exhausted its passion,) was a probable event. Caleb, therefore, skirted the forest borders, and wended his way towards the hall. Just as he expected, he had not proceeded far before the great man was seen sauntering idly along with his dog and gun.

As the squire approached, young Doughty lifted his hat, twitched the hair that hung over

his forehead, and "made a leg," as the old writers say. Influenced probably by the bland and fresh weather, Babstock was in an unusually good humour, and responded to the peasant's salutation as follows:—

"Fine day after the rain, eh, Master Doughty! How do you get on at the cottage? If this weather holds, I can find you some work. Come to me to-morrow."

Now nothing could be farther from Caleb's thoughts at that moment than such work as the squire meant; but he was pleased to find the great man in so talkative a mood, because it afforded a favourable opportunity for opening the all-important subject.

"Your honour's worship," said he, "has been pleased to ask how we get on at the cottage: bad enough, sir, I assure you. Everything depends on me, and I've nothing to do. Sister sits and frets all day long. She doesn't get a wholesome meal above once in two days; and as for mother, why, she grows weaker and weaker; though," he added, with a significant expression of countenance, "she sometimes brags that she could do altogether without food."

"Nonsense, man," returned the squire; "old women, like other folks, must eat. I'll do something for you all. Come to me, I say, tomorrow."

"Thank your worship," replied Caleb. "Mother will be glad to see me again at work. But there's something that plagues her more than any suffering either of mine or sister's. She don't mind for herself."

"Indeed!" ejaculated the squire, carelessly; "and what may that be which so plagues her, eh, Doughty?"

"Why, sir," responded the young man, "she's unhappy about the robbery going on at the hall."

The squire started, and threw a scrutinizing glance at Caleb. "Robbery at the hall!" echoed he; "and pray how does it happen that your mother knows anything about *that?* There's an old proverb, young man, which says, 'They who hide know where to find.' How should you or the old woman be acquainted with losses in my house? You have spoken enough for me, and, I fear, too much for yourself."

Squire Babstock was charmed with his own sagacity; but ominous and magisterial as were

his looks, Caleb was not in the least confused. He smiled knowingly; and the squire, perceiving the inefficacy of his wisdom, was, for a time, taken aback.

"You and I must not part just yet," said Babstock.

"I hope not, your worship," returned young Doughty.

"As you are so confident," pursued the squire, "perhaps you won't object to explain your mother's anxiety about my stolen goods. There is nobody here now, you know, to take your words down."

"I'm glad of that, sir," responded Caleb; "because what I have to say must be a secret between you and me."

The squire looked cautiously round, and having ascertained that he and the young man were quite alone, told the latter to speak without reserve.

Thus encouraged, Caleb said, with a very significant gesture, "My mother, though she never leaves her hut, knows better what's going on at the hall than your honour, or anybody else in it."

"How can that be, my man?"

"Why, by what they call 'art-magic.'"

"You don't mean to say, do you, that your mother is a witch?" demanded Babstock.

"She knows wonderful things, sir, and can *do* wonderful things," replied the young man. "She can prophecy and conjure, and work with charms. She can hear the mandrake mutter in the ground, and understand him. But mother is a good witch, not a bad one, and uses her skill to prevent mischief."

Every word told with full effect on the squire's mind. "Do you mean to say," asked he, "that your mother can hinder my being robbed again?"

"Certainly, your worship," responded Caleb. "And what's more, she can discover the thief."

"I'll see her, anon," said Babstock. "Where can we meet?"

"Here, sir, at twelve to-night, if you please. She can work her spells only at midnight."

It was a lonely spot; but the squire was a bold man. Even had he not been so, his curiosity would have got the better of his fears. Besides, he would not be very far from his own house.

"I will be here at the appointed time," said he.

"Alone, I hope, sir?"

"Yes, alone."

"In course, your worship won't object to reward mother."

"Certainly not. Whatever money she requires, in a reasonable way, shall be hers."

Young Doughty now doffed his hat, drew his leg back, and bent his head, to show his manners on parting with the squire, who returned thoughtfully to the Hall, while Caleb wended his way to his mother's hovel.

When the parties had separated to a good distance, Nathaniel Yare rose up from a coppice in which he had concealed himself close to the spot where the conference took place.

"I think I have the rogue now," said he to himself. "'Twas lucky I saw master and young Doughty as I came through the wood; and lucky, too, that they didn't see me. I'll teach Caleb a trick worth two of his."

CHAPTER VI.

The sticks are a-crosse, there can be no losse,
The sage is rotten; the sulphur is gotten
Up to the skie, that was i'the ground.
Follow it then, with our rattles round;
Under the bramble, over the briar,
A little more heat will set it on fire;
Put it in mind to do it kind,
Flow water, and blow wind.
Rouncy is over, Robble is under:
A flash of light, and a clap of thunder.
Now!

BEN JONSON.

DICK PITTOCK, perceiving that his company was not very acceptable to Maude and Amie, left the hovel on the return of the women from their stroll in the fresh air. Knowing that Caleb had gone out to meet Squire Babstock, Dick sauntered in the neighbourhood, hoping to see his

friend, and hear the result of his morning's work. In a little time he fell in with young Doughty, who, of course, acquainted him with all that had passed during his interview with the squire. Dick applauded the promptitude with which Caleb had made the midnight appointment; and after demonstrating the necessity of raising up a fiendish-looking object by their rites, offered to disguise himself for that purpose, and to appear suddenly on Maude's summons. In his demon-character, it was decided that he should denounce Nathaniel Yare as the thief.

This being settled, and a place of meeting agreed on between the two confederates, Caleb went home to prepare his mother for performing the so-called supernatural ceremony. The old woman trembled, as if under a death-sentence, when told that the foolish attempt must be so soon made. But she had pledged her word, and would not forfeit it. Amie insisted on being one of the party, and thus all things were arranged for this desperate method of raising money. In the interim, Maude endeavoured to recollect all she had heard and read touching witch-charms and spells.

A miserable day was that which was passed in Mistress Doughty's hut. Caleb, for the first time, was anxious, and almost regretted that he had set on foot so daring a scheme. It was now, however, too late to repent. Old Maude looked like one who had bidden farewell to life. She had never before lost her self-respect; but now she was conscience-stricken. She felt she was going to lend herself to a michievous, unlawful, and dishonest purpose; and even the reflection that she was striving to save her children from starvation failed to comfort her. Amie assumed an appearance of cheerfulness in order to solace her mother and brother.

At length midnight approached, and the three set out to fulfil their appointment. They were on the spot half-an-hour before the stated time. Dick was there, too, with a beast's hide and horns, which Caleb helped to fasten on him. Truly ridiculous did he look as he took up his post behind a great oak on the edge of the forest.

The night was pitch dark; but Maude's lantern threw its faint gleam a few yards around, sufficient, in fact, to indicate the spot to Babstock, who advanced towards the group precisely

at twelve o'clock. The tops of the forest trees hung over head in black and heavy masses, just discernible in the midnight air. Utter silence and deep gloom surrounded the company. A more solemn rendezvous could not have been selected. Its lonely grandeur offered a strong contrast to the burlesque purpose which drew our companions thither.

The squire looked curiously at poor Maude, who needed no disguise to give her the semblance of a sorceress. In her rags, her tattered cloak, and bonnet of a long-past fashion, she presented as haggard and withered an appearance as either of the weird sisters whom Macbeth encountered on the heath. But had the squire transferred his gaze from her habiliments to her face, he might have seen, veiled by age and sorrow, which had "written strange defeatures" there, some of the kindest expressions of human sympathy that ever hallowed a woman's countenance. As the great man joined the group, Amie dropped a simple rustic curtsey, and Caleb looked sheepish and confused; but not a word of greeting was uttered on either side.

Maude drew a heavy sigh, and, wishing to get

the orgies over as quickly as possible, addressed herself to her work. First of all, she made a little heap of dried sticks, on which she piled, cross-wise, some pieces of charcoal. When this was ready, she muttered the following invocation, which she had formerly read in Reginald Scot's "Discoverie of Witchcraft."

"Oh, mighty name, whether Tetragrammaton, Olioram, Noym, or Adonay, I do worship thee, I invocate thee, I implore thee, with all the strength of my mind, that, by thee, my present prayers, consecrations, and conjurations be hallowed; and wheresoever wicked spirits are called in virtue of thy names, they may come from every coast, and diligently fulfil the word of me, the exorcist! Fiat, fiat, fiat. Amen!"

Having uttered this address, she lighted the pyre, and threw into it several substances—mere rubbish, but which, nevertheless, she enumerated as hemlock, henbane, moonwort, nightshade, horned poppy, cypress-boughs, leaves of the wild fig-tree growing on tombs, together with owl's eyes, bat's wings, and viper's skin.* She then

* See Ben Jonson's "Masque of Queenes."

cast some sulphur on the burning charcoal, when a blue and dismal light gleamed over the assembly.

Squire Babstock looked on with a mixture of wonder and terror. He had heard much of withcraft, but never before stood in presence of an avowed practiser of the black art, nor imagined he could be permitted to witness the conjurations. As the preposterous ceremony proceeded, his heart swelled within him in anticipation of the result.

"What!" ejaculated Maude, in a voice which seemed ashamed of itself, "is the fiend rebellious? Will he not come? Nay, then, Amie, thou must try the rhyming spell."

Amie, accordingly, chanted the following, which her mother had taught her out of an old book of magic:—

Charm Song.

"Appear, appear,
Thou hideous offspring of hell's dark sphere!
By the rags of flesh, all blacken'd and sere,
That wave on a murderer's gibbet, come here!
By the festering things in a moulder'd bier,
Appear, appear!

"By the scritch-owl's scritch 'neath the yew-tree's shade,
By the three-form'd star* which doth never fade,
By the mandrake's groan and the nightmare's moan,
By the ghost that comes when one is alone,
By the viper's sting and the raven's wing,
By the noxious weeds that to grave-mounds cling,
By hemlock's root and aconite's shoot,
By the wing of the bat, and the lizard's foot,
By blood of wild ape, and foam of mad dog,—
From pond or bog, or mist or fog,
From wood or mountain,
Or poisonous fountain,
Appear, appear!

"Come, come to us, great Barbatos!†
The squire is crossed, his treasure is lost.
Appear, appear!—
He's here!—he's here!"

At these words, Dick rushed forth, making Babstock tremble from head to foot. Maude addressed the apparition. "Barbatos, I do adjure thee, say who has robbed the good Squire Babstock!"

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* "Hecate, who is called *Trivia* and *Triformis*, of whom Virgil, Æneid, lib. iv., *Tergeminamque Hecatem, tria virginis ora Dianæ.* She was believed to govern in witchcraft, and is remembered in all their invocations."—BEN JONSON.

† Barbatos is one of the master-spirits (as enumerated by Reginald Scot), one of whose offices was to detect hidden treasure.

On this, Dick, with a gruff voice, pronounced the words, "Nathaniel Yare."

The squire looked amazed. The suspicions of his servants had never been communicated to him. But, however astounding the present intelligence might be, he could not doubt it, seeing it was declared by supernatural power. A wise and competent magistrate, truly, must Squire Babstock have been!

He was about to question Maude further, when a man suddenly sprang forward, seized Dick by the collar, tore off his wrappings, and exclaimed, "Villain! I have long suspected your knavery! But I have got you now, safe enough."

Pittock, however, was not quite so easily captured. He shook off his assailant, who was no other than Nat. Yare, and would have escaped (for the squire seemed paralyzed), had not Yare made a signal, which brought a couple of constables from their ambush in the wood.

"Caleb!" shouted Dick, "stand by me, like a man, and we'll soon put these fellows to flight."

Young Doughty was not one to hang back on such an occasion, and, unquestionably, blood would have been shed, had not Maude and Amie

twined their arms about him, and thus enabled the officers to handcuff their prisoner.

"Now, constables," said Yare, "secure the women: they come under the statute against witchcraft. A pretty nest of iniquity we have discovered!"

"Let me loose, mother and Amie," exclaimed Caleb—"let me loose, I say. I mean nothing but to protect you both. If any man," continued he, addressing Yare and the constables, "offers to touch my mother or sister, he dies on the spot."

The officers were, nevertheless, advancing towards the three as they clung together in one group, when the squire, who had now recovered his self-possession, interfered, saying,

"Take your prisoner to the Hall, and see that he does not escape. I'll follow you, and thoroughly sift this strange business. The old woman and her children are dupes. Let them go their way."

Maude, almost drowned in tears, incoherently thanked his worship, and returned, covered by shame and remorse, with Caleb and Amie to the hovel.

CONCLUSION.

JOHN.—Craftie croane!
I long to be at the sport, and to report it.
SCARLET.—We'll make this hunting of the witch as famous
As any other blast of venerie.
SCATHLOCK.—Hang her, foule hagge!

Sad Shepherd.

THE dire consequences of Caleb's folly were now to ensue. His mother and sister, worn out by terror, repentance, and long watching, betook themselves, dressed as they were, to their miserable pallet, and, out of sheer exhaustion, slept soundly. Poor Maude! It was her last repose in this world. Their slumber lasted till mid-day, when they were awakened by a violent yelling

outside the hut, of men and women, and the barking of dogs.

"A witch—a witch!" was shouted. "Batter down the door! Drag her out!"

Caleb heard this before Maude and Amie were fairly roused out of their deep sleep. Springing to the door, he planted himself against it at the moment it was broken open, and with one desperate blow of his cudgel, felled to the ground the first man who entered.

Alas! this was of no avail. The merciless crowd forced their way, and dragged the women from their bed. With superhuman strength, young Doughty lifted his mother under one arm, and his sister under the other, and darted through the mob into the open air, when, setting Maude and Amie on their feet, he implored them to run for their lives, promising never to desert them. Panting and scared, the poor creatures made an effort to fly; but old Maude was too feeble to gain much speed, and soon sank, scarcely alive, to the earth. Amie knelt by her, determined to share her fate, and Caleb stood over them, resolved to perish by their side, since hope of escape could no longer be entertained.

"Let not the witches live!" was vociferated by the brutal crew.*

Caleb stared wildly at his pursuers who, shouting and roaring, approached their victims. His despairing looks were also cast round in every direction to ascertain whether the tumult had drawn the squire towards the spot. It was a lost hope. No human being, except his frantic enemies, could be discerned. So the young man, feeling that no chance remained, determined to fight to the last, and, if he could not save his mother, his sister, and himself, to wreak a deadly revenge on his assailants.

But the mob, knowing that Caleb would be a dangerous antagonist at close quarters, thought it wise to attack him when beyond the reach of his arm. Accordingly a heavy stone was cast, with

* In March, 1845, "a fellow was bound over, at Weymouth, to keep the peace towards his mother-in-law. It appeared that he had not only struck and kicked the poor woman, but that he sprung from behind a hedge, and rubbed a sharp thorn *across her eyes and face*, until streams of blood ran over her visage! His defence was, that his mother-in-law had *bewitched him*, and that the only way of breaking her spell was by *drawing blood from her person*."—(Sherbourne Journal, March, 1845). When will the madness and cruelty of superstition cease?

such force and unerring aim, at Doughty, as to beat in his forehead. He stood erect, for a moment or two after the mortal blow, and then dropped by Maude's side, exclaiming, "Mother, I die!"

The poor old creature raised herself, gazed at the wound, wiped the blood from it, and kissed her son's quivering and distorted face. But she could not brave the terror of the scene. Her heart was broken, and, after a few convulsive spasms, she drew her last breath.

The ferocious and cowardly mob, now coming up to the group, proposed to drag Amie away, and put her to the drowning ordeal. In this they were eventually frustrated by the arrival of Squire Babstock, at the head of a posse of constables. The innocent, forlorn girl was thus rescued, though only to pass a few miserable months, as a maniac, in a pauper mad-house.

Dick Pittock was tried for burglary at the hall, and hanged. It was discovered, that in his frequent visits at the squire's house, he had seized an opportunity of taking a wax model of Yare's key of the closet, wherein the plate was kept. Another key by this means was procured. Thus

provided, he had, on more than one occasion, entered the house by an unguarded pantry window, and escaped with a certain portion of valuables. From his familiar knowledge of the premises he had managed this without detection. But Yare, as we have seen, suspected him; and, on the night of the storm, had tracked him to Maude Doughty's hovel, about which he (the butler) had lurked, in hope of discovering something conclusive.

How he happened to be near the spot during the mock incantation, the reader is already aware.

OSBORNE NORTHBROOKE;

A STORY OF

LIFE-IN-DEATH.

N

A dumb, dead corpse we saw,
Heavy and cold, the shape of death aright.

MIRROR FOR MAGISTRATES.

OSBORNE NORTHBROOKE.

Queen's Square, 15th November, 1747.

It was my intention, an hour ago, to visit Drury Lane Theatre, and see Garrick in *Hamlet;* but the evening has turned out so rainy and gloomy that I will remain at my fireside, and devote the coming hours, (till the return of my wife and children from an evening party,) to forming a narrative of a strange incident in my life. I shall not do this with any purpose of printing it at present, but shall leave it among my papers; and if, after I am gathered to "the great majority," any one connected with me should think fit to give it to the public, I trust its details may not be altogether useless.

To the afflictions which beset me many years ago, I can now look back with perfect calmness. Not that I am by any means free from a recurrence of them, but that I feel when next they attack me their visitation will be final. The time is past when strength was given me to combat such evils. I shall never be in a condition to recite another event similar to that I am now to describe; and, to my belief, I am the only living man capable of telling such a story.

About two-and-twenty years ago, namely, in 1725, I formed a passionate attachment to a young lady of good family, my present wife, with whom I have passed as happy a matrimonial life as ever blessed any man. The misfortune I had already suffered, returned in its utmost ghastliness upon me two years after our union (during the lapse of the previous year, I had been free from it), and all but ended in an unutterable tragedy. This danger might have been avoided had I placed entire confidence in her who had inseparably linked her fate with mine. I dared not, however, communicate my secret to Olivia before marriage, because I dreaded to lose her hand; and I was weak enough afterwards

to persevere in concealment—a fault which punished me, the offender, and my unsuspecting wife, with inexpressible anguish and terror.

One friend, and one only, was aware of the calamity to which I was liable. Knowing the sincerity of his feelings towards me, I scrupled not to solicit his care and frequent vigilance to avert an all-dreaded extremity which, but for such superintendence, might come to pass. It is true that in a distant part of the kingdom, where I had formerly lived, my miserable liability was not altogether unknown; but I repeat that in London no one but Richard Newnham was, at the time in question, acquainted with it.

One morning, shortly before my marriage, I had an interview with my friend.

"Newnham," said I, "I more than ever need your kindness. Can you perpetuate your watchfulness over me? Will you consent to dwell near me?"

"Willingly," returned he; "willingly, as far as I myself am concerned; but—"

He paused, as people pause when they are about to press advice which they know will meet a reluctant, if not a painful, reception. Guessing

what he wished to say, I anticipated it, and observed, "You think, Richard, I should conceal nothing from Miss Sutherland. Were you not on the point of saying so?"

"Yes," replied he.

"Perhaps you are right," I rejoined; "but I have not nerve enough to encounter the risk which a disclosure of this kind would involve. Fear might induce her to reject a man subject to such a visitation—a visitation which, nevertheless, may never again scare me and my friends. But even should it come, you, Richard, by being at hand, can save me."

"Though I do not like concealments between man and wife," pursued Newnham, "I promise not to leave you; so make yourself easy as far as my agency is concerned. Give me some wine, Northbrooke, and let me drink happiness to you and your bride."

This toast, pledged in all sincerity by my friend, I reciprocated,) after expressing my gratitude for his invaluable services,) in a bumper to his own health and welfare. And then we began to speak of things which to us were of smaller import, such as the impeachment of the Earl of Maccles-

field, the Hanover treaty, the re-establishment of the Knights of the Bath, and other topics of the day. Newnham was voluble on these matters; and I congratulated myself on the belief that my wine and the public themes, touching which we had discoursed, had, for a time, obliterated all impression of the painful subject which had at first engaged us.

In this I was mistaken. On a sudden my friend's face assumed a grave aspect.

"One toast more, Northbrooke," said he, "and only one. Let us drink it in silence. Haply, our aspiration may find grace as a prayer, though it is breathed with glass in hand. Fill your cup. *May the dismal affliction never again haunt you!*"

Had not Newnham been drinking more than was his wont, I do not think he would have coupled a Bacchanalian libation with a solemn and pious wish. But with him, wine had a paradoxical effect: it elevated and depressed him almost at the same moment. We are all the victims of peculiar temperaments. It cannot be, as some rashly say, that our animal portion may be reduced to subjection by our mental faculties;

on the contrary, I believe that the latter are triumphed over by physical organization.

Newnham had now taken his parting glass: he would drink no more; and, after affectionately renewing his promises, he bade me "Good night."

By the above conversation, I was freed from my great source of inquietude, and therefore addressed myself cheerfully to the preliminaries of my marriage. I had need of this cheerfulness; for, while thoroughly recognising their necessity, there was something inexpressibly repugnant to my feelings in the cold and business-like consultation with lawyers respecting settlements and such affairs.

"Alas!" thought I, "why cannot the impulse of two hearts be obeyed, without clogging them with formal skins of parchment?"

To this, however, Prudence is ready to answer with a bitter voice—Prudence, our firmest, though seemingly our most ungracious, friend.

After a short interval from the above time, Olivia and I were united in presence of a large circle of her friends and mine. Never shall I forget that day, of which the happiness was re-

buked by the tears of her relatives on parting from my wife; but which, in their turn, were rendered less depressing by a prospect to us of coming felicity for years. After all, in spite of its exultation, a wedding day is not the most blessed part of a married life. Tranquillity and content—the sweets of tender companionship and fond sympathy—these are worth a hundredfold more than the flurry, the show, the ostentatious congratulations and ceremonials, of bridal parade.

After passing a week in the country—(I did not dare to remain longer)—my wife and I returned to London, and took possession of a house in Bloomsbury, which I had previously furnished, as our home. On the morning after our arrival, Newnham paid us a visit. He had already been introduced to Olivia, so that his presence was, in a manner, familiar to us both. I could see, however, that my wife was rather surprised at so early a call on his part, more especially as he was the first visitor we had received since our marriage. Newnham, I think, perceived this; for, after a brief chat, he left us. Whatever might have been Olivia's feelings, I understood and appreciated my friend's solicitude.

In a few days, we had visitors enough and to spare. My wife's relations, male and female, crowded about us, and we returned their calls; so that we seemed to live more for others than for ourselves. I was tired of this incessant bustle —this fatiguing gaiety; and longed for the time when, without any danger of being thought to neglect our friends, we might enjoy each other's company. Olivia seemed fully to participate this wish.

A week passed without our seeing any thing more of Newnham. I was not uneasy at this, having perfect reliance on my friend's care, and, knowing that in a day or two, at farthest, he would gladden me with his presence. On the eighth day after his first visit he came again, and I persuaded him to stay and dine with me, my wife, and one of her female relations.

I know not how it came about, but during dinner, and until the ladies left the table, our conversation was of a gloomy character. In vain did I try to turn it into a cheerful channel. My wife's relative held tenaciously to the themes which had been started, and these were supernatural influences, and moral and physical phe-

nomena. The young lady seemed to revel in such subjects, and possessed an affluent store of "instances," both modern and ancient, which she detailed with a certain grim earnestness. She spoke of those whom, she affirmed, possessed *unquestionably* the gift of second sight—of biloquists—of those whose dreams were prophetic, and of men and women who could walk and talk, and scale dangerous places in perfect safety, when fast asleep.

Neither Newnham nor I were able to interpose a word. The young lady monopolized the talk; and, having cast a shadow over what was meant to be a merry meeting, declared her belief that persons possessing the attributes she had enumerated, or any others peculiar to themselves, were not perfect human beings, but had a mixture of something fiendish in their composition. She protested that nothing should induce her to form an alliance in any family of which one individual could command powers not common to people in general. Influenced, I suppose, by her friend's volubility, my wife professed entire acquiescence in her opinion. Newnham and I were at length left to ourselves.

"Now, my friend," said I, "you see the wisdom of my not having disclosed to my wife that which I have endeavoured to keep secret from all but yourself."

Newnham shook his head in dissent.

"Surely," pursued I, "you heard all which that young lady so emphatically pronounced; and you could not but perceive its effect on my wife."

"It was impossible not to hear what Miss Winburn said," returned Newnham, with a smile; "neither could one fail to detect the absurdity of her conclusions. But no part of her observations applied to you. You are not a ghost-seer, nor a ventriloquist, nor a prophetic dreamer, nor a sleep-walker. You have no power in yourself; on the contrary, you are the victim of—"

"Hush!" I exclaimed, suddenly interrupting him. "Hush! we may be overheard."

* * * * * *

For the remainder of the night, after Newnham left me, I could not rally my spirits, but was plunged in unhappy thought. Oh, how I lamented my wife's relationship to Miss Winburn! and what disquiet did I suffer at every visit of

that young lady to our house! In the perverse art of self-tormenting, I fancied she disliked—nay, more, that she *suspected* me. But to what could her suspicions tend? I was free from reproach. Even this consciousness, however, failed to comfort me; and, at times, I felt that the expression of my face denoted my wretchedness. Whenever Miss Winburn glanced at my countenance, I imagined she was actuated by a shuddering curiosity. I was incapable of desiring that any evil might befall her, though I certainly wished her out of my way. She could not have been offended had she known how heartily I hoped she might soon get a husband, provided he lived in some place not nearer than Scotland.

Newnham did not fail in his periodical visits, which occurred in precise intervals of a week. The regularity of these calls at length attracted Olivia's observation; but though her allusion to them was in terms of artless gaiety, I felt somewhat embarrassed at the prospect of their systematic continuation, and therefore proposed to him that he should see me at his own house from time to time—that his visits to us should be irregular as to periods, and at longer intervals

than usual; but that should I be absent from him more than five days, he was forthwith to repair to my residence.

Under this arrangement two years passed—two blissful years—during which the gaunt apprehension I had laboured under grew fainter and fainter, and at last almost ceased to exist. I revelled in this fancied immunity. "I am free now and always. Why should I longer tremble at what has for ever passed away?" Such were my exulting exclamations. And to crown the transport, my prayers for Miss Winburn's delivery from the pains of "single blessedness," seemed to have been heard. She had married, and lived many miles from London. Her ominous words, and, as I thought, more ominous looks, no longer haunted me.

In the confidence of enfranchisement, I called on my friend. "Newnham," said I, "be no longer under any alarm for me. I am disenchanted—delivered from a dreadful spell. Who have been the exorcists? who but my Olivia, and the prattling babe she has borne to me?"

"I have for some time partaken of this belief," returned Newnham. "Your exemption from

the horror is now of very long date. Put confidence in your hope, and you may be safe. Faith, having something, however small, to stand on, is a powerful auxiliary in keeping off those visitations which

'Shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.'"

"Thank you for this encouragement, Richard," I responded. "My spirits are buoyant: the soft, tiny, and feeble hands of my infant have been strong enough to lift a perilous load from my bosom. My ecstacy cannot find vent in words. I am transported with delight, and long to stand on the topmost peak of some cloud-piercing mountain, and shout my defying triumph."

To this madness of my joy, Newnham, did not respond. Even the enthusiasm of his friendship was qualified by prudence. He rebuked my irrational fervour, and reminded me that security from my peculiar danger was to be insured rather by calm thankfulness, than by indulgence in passionate impulses.

"Be master of yourself," said he. "Be calm—be prepared—and that which torments you will

find no path by which its attacks can be made. If I can succeed in impressing this on your mind, there need be no fear. *You* will be free, and *I* shall be released. Do not misunderstand me. I seek not release from trouble, but from apprehension for your welfare."

"I reverence your friendly motives, my dear Newnham," returned I, grasping him by the hand. "Be assured that I will strictly follow your dictates. The joy of anticipated emancipation has thrown me into a wild rapture. Counselled by you, I will offer my gratitude to Heaven in tranquillity."

In spite of a lurking incredulity, Newnham professed his satisfaction at what I had said; and then told me that he wished to make a journey for a fortnight to Northumberland.

"Go, Richard," said I; "fear not for me. Three blessed years have past since the dire mischief showed itself. Why should I any longer be a clog on your almost god-like devotion? A temporary absence will only elevate the pleasure of our renewed meeting."

* * * * * *

My friend was now away from me several

hundred miles. It was the first time during many years that I had lived without a consciousness of his being near me. Though, on his leaving London, I felt perfectly valiant, and assured that the peculiar calamity which required his presence would not overwhelm me, I, nevertheless in a day or two, became nervous, apprehensive, terrified. Olivia perceived a change in my manner. Her evident anxiety increased my own; and though thoroughly sensible of the unreasonableness of placing a restraint on the actions of my friend, I regretted that I had not implored him to remain with me. In vain did I attempt to persuade myself that life was not worth having if its freedom from misery could only be secured by sacrificing another's pleasure. Should I disclose my fears to my wife? No! I had, by former omission, deceived her. I must now take my chance.

The depression under which I laboured increased on me with such rapid strides as, on one particular day, utterly to destroy all power of resistance. As one who, struggling through a narrow ravine, with beetling precipices on each side, should see a tiger bounding towards him,—so

did I feel that my enemy was rushing at me, and that I could not escape.

I was alone in my library: my limbs had lost all power of movement: to rise and ring the bell was impossible; and even had I been able to do so, I could only have stared wildly at whoever might answer the summons, for of utterance I was incapable. The hands of the tormentor were upon me, and I was forced to yield. My whole frame became rigid; my jaw dropped; my eyes were fixed; my pulsation became imperceptible. But I could see all that was around me, though, in my then state of vision, each object was invested with colours not its own. I was perfectly conscious of my situation; could hear with painful distinctness the slightest whisper; and felt the horrible conviction that in this apparently exanimate state, I might remain several days, and then be buried—buried alive! Newnham could have saved me, but Newnham was away.

Such was my dreadful *idiosyncrasy*. It has been experienced only by a few others; and these have lived at such distant intervals, that the majority of medical physiologists are not aware of the phenomenon. To exhibit all the

signs of death, and yet be alive and conscious; to feel every touch, and yet not betray sensation; to be in a state of mental sensibility, while utterly powerless as to muscular movement or vocal utterance—this is indeed the most ghastly state in which a human being can be placed. The disease is not apoplexy, nor palsy, nor syncope, nor what is vulgarly called "trance," because in those afflictions sensation is denied; whereas in the visitation to which I was unhappily subject, sensation was preternaturally acute.*

* It has been stated by a medical philosopher, that we "ought by no means to conclude that the sense of hearing is totally lost because the person under examination does not discover himself to be possessed of it by the slightest motion of the eye-lids, the lips, the fingers, or any other parts of the body: for, as it is generally thought that the heart is the first part of the body which moves, so those who, after they are deprived of the other senses, give distinct relations of every thing they had heard during that time, can attest that the sense of hearing remains longer than any of the rest. The truth of this is, in a remarkable manner, confirmed by the testimony of a catholic priest, who having affirmed that it was unlawful to give absolution to a dying person, who by no signs discovered that he had the sense of hearing, altered his opinion after he himself had fallen into a deliquium so violent, as to deprive him of all motion, though at the same time he distinctly heard the whole conversation of those who were

Alone, alone in this miserable state, I remained an hour—a long, long hour. I could count the time by the dial on the mantel-shelf. Bitterly did I meditate, but with profound reverence, on the inscrutable dispensations of Providence—on those dispensations which had made me the prey of so gaunt a malady. Among my other ruminations, it even occurred to me that if

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present when his misfortune happened."—*Uncertainty of the Signs of Death*, 1751.

"There have been many examples of men in show dead, either laid out upon the cold floor, or carried forth to burial: nay, of some buried in the earth; which, notwithstanding have lived again, which hath been found in those that were buried (the earth being afterwards opened) by the bruising and wounding of their head, through the struggling of the body within the coffin; whereof the most recent and memorable example was that of Joannes Scotus, called '*the Subtil*,' and a schoolman, who being digged up again by his servant, (unfortunately *absent at his burial, and who knew his master's manner in such fits*,) was found in that state. And the like happened in our days in the person of a player buried at Cambridge."—LORD BACON. *History of Life and Death.*

See also "A Supplementary Report on the Results of a Special Inquiry into the Practice of Interment in Towns, made at the request of Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. By Edwin Chadwick, Esq., Barrister-at-law." 1843.

by some miracle (Newnham being absent) I should be saved, the *ci-devant* Miss Winburn would count me among her semi-fiends. But for this I cared not. I yearned for life on any terms.

To what could my peculiar organization be liable? Was it hereditary? On a sudden, a recollection of my youth flashed upon me, and I seemed to have obtained a clue to the mystery.

Let me here relate the incident which (though many years had passed) was vividly acted over again in retrospection.

My mother (a widow) having suffered a grievous illness, was taken for dead, and laid out as a corpse. As night came on, a wax candle was lighted and placed on a table close to her feet. I slept in a chamber adjoining hers. Before day-break, I was horribly startled on hearing a shriek, and some incoherent words uttered in my mother's voice! Rushing into the room, I saw the supposed corpse in a sitting posture, half-wrapped in flames. Two women were there, trembling and aghast. The hideous extremity gave me presence of mind; and, throwing blankets on the body, I stifled the flames. What was my joy on finding that my mother

lived! The fiery pain had resuscitated her; and, fortunately, I stopped the burning before it had done its fatal work. She suffered some time from the injury; but eventually recovered. On inquiry, it appeared that the women (as is too often their habit) had drunk to excess; and moving about incautiously, had overturned the candle, and ignited the garments in which she whom they watched was clothed.

I now attributed to the shock I then received, and to the tendency to deliquium on the part of my mother, the wretched liability which has haunted my life. That in my present danger I should have made such investigations, may appear incredible; but so it was.

While thus thinking and thus despairing, the door was opened, and Olivia entered. Joy, like a burst of sudden sunshine came over me. It soon faded, for alas! I could not speak, could not move!

My wife approached me—looked at me—passed her hand over my face, which, no doubt, was cold. She grew pale; her countenance assumed a dismal expression: she staggered to the bell and rang it violently. A servant speedily appeared.

"Run instantly," gasped she: "Run to Bloomsbury Square—to Doctor Mead, and beg him to come hither without loss of time. Your master is ill—dying. Run, run."

The man departed on his errand, and I was left alone with her whom I valued more than life itself, precious as the latter seemed to me at that awful juncture. She sat down by my side, and took one of my hands in hers. I question which of us looked the most forlorn: I, the living corpse, or she, the self-imagined widow. Her agony seemed to petrify her. We might both have been taken for pale statues.

Doctor Mead (living so near me) soon arrived. He felt my wrists, but could detect no pulse: he peered into my eyes; they were fixed: he closed my jaw; it fell again: he held a mirror over my face; it was unstained.

"Madam," said he, mournfully, to my wife, "come with me from this place. All is over!"

Olivia would now have fainted, but that Mead upheld her, and bore her out of the room.

Of the sufferings which my wife underwent during the next four-and-twenty hours, I was not a witness, as she did not again enter the room till

I was placed in my coffin. Oh! that horrible process, and those which preceded it! The clothes I wore when the dreadful visitation came on me were taken off, and I was wrapped in a shroud. How I loathed the touch of those busy fingers that were "laying me out," as the phrase is, decently! But more detestable even than this, were the men who lifted me, by the head and feet, into that narrow box—our final chamber. The hard lid was now placed over me slantwise, so that light was not altogether shut out. Great God, what were my maddening emotions! In a little time I should be inclosed for ever in darkness—should hear the driving of the screws which would imprison me till doomsday! What demon could have possessed me when I suffered Newnham to go so far away?

Two days more elapsed, and still every muscle in my body refused to obey my will. My good and afflicted wife frequently came into the darkened chamber, to gaze at and pray by me. I felt her hot tears fall on my face. I heard her sobs and broken ejaculations, and loved her more than ever. Cruel, cruel fate! Why could I not die and end such intolerable anguish!

At length arrived the last evening on which I should be permitted to see the light of Heaven. The funeral was to take place on the morrow. *I was lost!* The feeble ray of hope that till now had flickered before my eyes, expired. The grave was already dug to receive me—me, a living man! Horror, unutterable horror! No help! Nothing but passive submission to a tremendous fate!

How it happened that the senses which, up to this time, I retained, were not stricken away by frenzy, I know not; but I still listened to every sound and movement. These were very few, as, for the most part, the house was hushed in gloomy reverence to the dead.

Ha! what is that—that violent pealing of the muffled knocker—that peremptory ringing of the house-bell? More noise! a hurried talking in the passage, and a rush of feet upstairs! Can Newnham have arrived? Yes, yes! My preserver is here!

Pale, and out of breath, my friend, accompanied by Olivia, darted into the room. In a moment the hard and stifling board was removed from over me.

"I do not despair of restoring him," said Newnham to my wife. "Send one of the men to me, and order a bed to be warmed."

My wife flew to fulfil what was desired, and my valet was soon in the room. Assisted by Newnham, he quickly delivered me from the coffin, drew off the hateful wrappings in which I was inclosed, and carried me to bed. Though in a little while I had some slight feeling of the warmth, my immobility was as stubborn as ever. Hot bricks were now applied to my feet. Other means were perseveringly adopted; and at length Newnham and his companion agitated my limbs by violent extensions and inflections.

Watching the proper moment, my friend, placing his mouth close to my ear, cried out with a loud voice, "Northbrooke! Osborne Northbrooke,—awake! You are in danger. Awake! Your friend Newnham calls you. Awake!"*

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* The author of "Uncertainty of the Signs of Death," recommends, among other remedies, in extremities similar to the above, that "the patient's limbs should be agitated by violent extensions and inflections, and the ears shocked by hideous shrieks and excessive noises."

This sudden vociferation following the other endeavours, dissipated, in a slight degree, the lethargy which had so long held my muscles in thrall. Though weak even to exhaustion, I was able to give my friend a faint token that he had succeeded. Some corroborating and cordial liquors were now dropped into my mouth, and after an effort or two I swallowed them. The glad intelligence was conveyed to my wife, though she was forbidden for some hours to see me. Newnham remained at my side during the night, from time to time administering restoratives, and watching anxiously lest the torpor might return. On the next mid-day I once more folded my dear wife in my arms.

I will not profane the sacredness of so hallowed an interview by any attempt to describe it.

We learned that Newnham, while in Northumberland, had read an account in a newspaper of my "sudden death," and that, without the least delay, he had posted to London as fast as horses could convey him. A little longer, and his anxious energy would have been in vain.

Since the period above recorded, I have been blessed by two other children—girls—who by the

sound of the carriage at the door, are just returned with their mother and brother from a ball at a neighbour's house. It is two o'clock in the morning. I have finished my narrative just in time, and will only add that I can now consign myself to my pillow without any fear, should my singular malady return, of being BURIED ALIVE.*

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* The above recital is founded on a well-authenticated incident. In his "English Malady," page 307, Doctor Cheyne gives an instance even more remarkable than the present, of Death-in-Life.

THE DISINTERMENT.

My late espousèd saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis, from the grave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.

MILTON.

THE DISINTERMENT.

On a fine morning in the month of June, 1798, a funeral procession issued from the park-gates of Beauchamp Hall, in Gloucestershire. It was a holiday, a silent one, in the neighbouring village. The stately burial-pageant, with its "pomp and circumstance," its plumed hearse, black steeds, solemn escutcheons, mourning coaches, and scarfed mutes pacing by the horses' sides, was closed by a troop of villagers.

About ten days previously, the same humble individuals had assembled in the park to see, and assist in, a display of far different character. A happy celebration, with shows, feasting, and dancing, had then drawn them thither; but other

feelings than curiosity and the love of a *sight* attracted them *now*. They yearned to pay their last sad testimony of respect and affection to one who had been endeared to them by many acts of benevolence: they followed to its cold home the corpse of their benefactress, Bertha, wife of Sir William Fanshaw.

Never shone a lovelier summer-day than the one appointed for this dismal ceremony. Soft airs were abroad, laden with the odour of flowers: the trees looked proudly in the lustiness of their young green: the deep blue sky was unspotted by a single cloud; and the sun threw out his sultry strength, filling our English atmosphere with the wide radiance of an Italian noon.

Alas, what was all this glory of Nature to the dark company who were moving along the road, thinking of the tomb, and of the premature death of that young, beautiful, and virtuous lady whom they were conveying thither! How could they enjoy the pleasant whispering of leaves under whose boughs they passed, when the death-bell, gaining in strength as they proceeded, smote their ears and startled their secret sorrowing with its measured and obstinate recurrence? The glad

colour of the grass and of the leaves was not in harmony with their mourning garments: there was no comfort in the salutation of the mild winds; and the vital sun itself was unwelcome, shining, as it did, on their tears, and on that dark, slow-moving hearse.

The service for the burial of the dead is too awful to be heard without causing the nerves to throb and the heart to swell. Its words oppress one as with a mystery, while its far-reaching thoughts carry us beyond this world. If such be its effect on a casual auditor, what must have been felt by the present mourners under their unexpected and afflicting loss, when the priest, meeting the coffin at the church-porch, walked on before it, uttering, in a half chant, his solemn words? Then the agony of grief burst forth in sobs and hysterics; and then the dreary thought arose that the world was nothing but mortification and corruption.

But we are always slaves of circumstances; for these ideas, which (so to speak) seemed to lie down immoveably in despair, were soon lifted, on the swell of the organ's sounds, into sweet, though still mournful aspirations; and the cottagers who

had closed the procession, and who now stood moodily in the churchyard while the silence within the fane continued, were also relieved by the anthem, and blessed it as it trembled out into the sunny air.

Sir William Fanshaw had been married only one year. He fairly doted on his young wife; and he had reason to do so, for a sweeter, gentler creature never existed. She was lovely in mind and body (an unwonted union), and had devoted her many charms to him out of a fondness equal to that he entertained for her.

The first anniversary of their wedding was celebrated by a day's revel,—a day, it might almost be said, of mad pleasure, for the joy was excessive, and the month was June. Bells and early shouts welcomed the morning; the country lads were "dressed in their Sunday clothes," as the song says, and the damsels were decked in their best *be-seen*, flaunting away in blue gowns, yellow kerchiefs, gaudy nosegays, and scarlet-trimmed bonnets. They were all feasted in the park, and, before mid-day, became clamorous in their merriment: "tipsy dance and jollity" and boisterous love-making filled the trim shades with

noise; and as the day declined, a banquet was provided in the mansion for the visitors of quality.

At night, when the peasantry, conquered by drink and the fatigue of a long day's jollification, retreated to their beds, the ancient silence of the park, which had resumed itself for a brief interval, was again startled, but more gently, by the sounds of refined music and the stir of a masked ball on the lawn. The ladies, in the full display of their accomplishments, looked more seducing than ever as they moved under the illuminated leaves; the gentlemen were proportionably gallant; and it is therefore no wonder that they danced far into the morning, even till they were lighted by the sun.

It was altogether a fatiguing business; but so it is with young folks who think pleasure is not pleasure till it becomes toil. The last dance was languidly performed. Lady Fanshaw, who, as hostess, had exerted herself immoderately the whole day, began now to look weary and overcome. This did not escape the notice of her husband, who was therefore less surprised when, as the party were refreshing themselves with coffee

in the cool morning, she suddenly whispered to him, "Take me into the house—I faint."

She was conveyed to her chamber, and it was thought that a day's rest would have recovered her; but she continued ill—alarmingly so.

On the third day of her malady, she begged her husband to bring her the gold chain and locket inclosing his hair, which he had given her before her marriage. This, she hung round her neck, and solaced her weary and painful hours with contemplating it, and recalling to her mind many sweet circumstances of their early courtship. In the evening she beckoned Sir William, who was sitting, in the chamber, to her side, and said,

"Give me your hand, my dear husband: I am growing much worse; I feel a perilous sinking in my frame, and death is in my thoughts. If this be nothing more than womanly timidity, bear with it, dearest, for my sake, and give me courage by staying by my side through the night."

"Be comforted, my love," replied her husband; "this weakness is common enough. It is debility brought on by over-excitement on the

day of that inordinate revel. You will be better in the morning; and, meanwhile, be assured I shall not stir from your bed. You will talk to me in a different manner, when, after you wake from a good sleep, I shall show you the cheerful sunrise stealing on the dawn. I see even now your eyes are closing; compose yourself, therefore, dear one, and sleep."

The chamber was hushed; the patient lay still, and seemed in so profound a repose, that her breathing was not heard. The curtains were softly adjusted round her bed; and her husband, happy and entertaining favourable omens from the belief that she had at length a remission of pain, took a book, and, fixing as much attention on it as he could command, wore the night-hours away.

Everything within and without continued in deep stillness, broken only towards dawn by pleasant sounds of awakening nature heard in this removed place: the shrill birds, the wheeling hum of bees darting from their hives in the garden below, and the leaves dallying with the morning's breath. These, together with strong, white lines intersecting the shutters,

admonished Sir William and the nurse that night had passed. Day-light was therefore admitted, and they looked into the bed.

"How is this?" exclaimed Sir William. "She has not moved a hair's breadth since we saw her last night. She hardly seems to breathe. Good God! how pale her face and lips are! Heaven grant all may be well! But I tremble under my fears. Go instantly and bring the physician."

The physician came: he was alarmed at his patient's appearance; a feather was placed on her lips, and Sir William bent over it with keen eyes. It did not move. Alas, alas, her spirit had passed away while her husband, sitting close to her, was congratulating himself on the prospect of her recovery!

She *must* have stirred once in the night, though it was with such gentleness as not to be perceived; for one of her hands was found inside her garment pressing on her breast the locket which she had hung round her neck the previous night.

Let no one attempt to describe the heaving of her husband's heart, and the gush of his tears,

when this touching instance of her love was made known to him. His soul brooded over it night and day. He saw in her action the wish she had not strength to utter in words; and, determining it should not be violated, he directed she should be placed in her coffin without disturbing the locket or her hand. Having seen this fulfilled, the heart-broken man took his last gaze at his wife's dead countenance, and hid himself in the solitude of his own room.

It will readily be imagined that so affecting a circumstance as this final manifestation of love by the deceased became the subject of much talk; and as, in these cases, no particulars are ever omitted, the value of the trinket, set round with brilliants, found a place in the story.

Now, the sexton of the church containing the family vault was one of the persons to whom this anecdote became known. It fairly haunted his mind; he shed tears so plentifully when he told the story, that at length his veneration was washed clean away: cupidity took its place, and after a day or two he mentioned the circumstance no more. He gradually failed to comprehend the sentiment which ordained those love-tokens to lie

in hallowed immoveability on a dead breast; and he was not long in conceiving a plan by which he might possess himself of the buried jewels glittering so temptingly in his mind's eye.

It is not probable that the man would have meditated a common theft—a theft capable of injuring any living creature; nay, although he was in business, he had never been known to practice any of the usual tricks or deceptions of trade. He was a charitable well-meaning man; but this interment of gold and precious stones was, in his opinion, a very silly waste of treasure: the ornaments were thrown away upon a dead body which could in nowise display them: they would never be missed; he and his family would be benefited by them, while no harm whatever could possibly come to any one by his meditated appropriation.

He therefore determined that, on the night of the funeral, he would enter the vault, open the coffin, and remove the jewels. The church was well situated for his purpose; it stood apart from the village to which it belonged, and, like that of Kingsbury in Middlesex, was a solitary edifice in the midst of fields.

Behold him, then, in the darkness of the night, with his lantern at the lone church door! He unlocks it, and passes in. At first, he was rather awe-stricken by the dead stillness, the sudden heavy smell so different from the genial air without, and the vacant pews standing in deep shadow like melancholy and drear recesses. The nature of his office had given him a familiarity with the building, but had not obliterated from his mind the idea of its sacredness.

It was an awful place to him now, for he came on an unholy errand; he quaked to think that it should be the spot where he was to perpetrate the first deed in his life which he would be ashamed to own. As he went along the aisle with his lamp, the white tablets on the walls glared, as it were, reproachfully upon him one by one;

> The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem'd to freeze,
> Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
> Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
> He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails! *

His perturbation was increased by the dart of a

* Keats.

bat close to his face; and, on looking round, he thought the pews were not quite empty; a pale congregation seemed to be in the church. He knew this could be only fancy; and although he smiled it away, he was not altogether easy to think that, for the first time in his life, he should be subject to such visions. He almost repented he had come; nevertheless, he went on and passed into the vault.

Having put down his lamp on a coffin close by, he proceeded with his instruments to remove the lid of the one he sought, which was soon effected. This was the first moment of real irresolution and terror. The sight of the corpse, lying there by that dim light in the heavy stillness of death, with its white and placid countenance, caused his heart to beat, and rendered his nerves powerless.

The sublimity of the sight made him feel the meanness of his action with double force: he almost fainted; and, intending to abandon so unhallowed an act, he returned into the body of the church. There he supported himself while the coolness of the air refreshed him, and he was at length about to depart, when, recollecting

that the lid of the coffin should be replaced, he summoned a strong effort, and went again into the vault for that purpose.

But the consternation had done its utmost. The sight of the corpse was not now so awful as before. His original intention imperceptibly returned, and by a quick effort he lifted the body, drew the chain over the head, disengaged the locket from under the hand, and then lowered the corpse into its place.

As he did this, the arm which before lay on the breast, fell, with a strange flexibility over the side of the coffin, and a faint sigh came from the body.

Had a thunder-clap broken in on the silence, the man would not have been so staggered as by this little sigh. He rushed hastily forth, left the vault unclosed, and opened the church-door to go out; when, as if to increase his bewilderment, the first thing that met his eyes, was the great moon lifting itself, in the unabated power of its light, over the horizon's edge. It shone right opposite, and seemed looking at, and coming to expose, him. He did not dare to lift his eyes again; but, without stopping even to

lock up the church, he flew over the fields pursued by his fear.

At this time it was about eleven o'clock. The domestics at the hall had not yet retired to rest. Their minds were unsettled by the funeral; and they found relief in sitting up together and talking over the circumstances connected with their lady's illness and sudden death. With hearts thus full, they could not endure the silence of their chambers, and any endeavour to sleep would have been vain: therefore about the hour just mentioned, they left their room and dull candles, to go out under the portico of the house, and enjoy the balmy night-air and the bright moon.

The subject of their talk continued the same: —the youth of their lady, her gentleness, her unaccountable illness, the sublime testimony she gave of her love, even in the grasp of death; and then of what would become of their heart-broken master, who had been all day secluded in his room, scarcely admitting any one even to bring him needful refreshment,—when one of them with a low voice said:

"What can that white thing be which is flut-

tering about the beech-trees there, at the farthest end of the long walk?"

They looked, and nothing was seen. It was, however, only leaf-hidden for a time; for presently it emerged altogether from the obscurity of the trees, and they saw it plainly enough.

The walk was about a quarter of a mile in length. The object advanced down it; and soon a fearful sight was seen by the company under the portico; an apparently human figure with long, trailing, white garments, staggering and stumbling across the open park at that solemn hour, and under the keen moonlight.

They did not remain to see any more; but, hastening to their master's room, told him what they had witnessed.

He answered them with his faint voice from within:

"Go to rest, my friends; go to rest. Your minds are disturbed; and, to tell you the truth, my own is too much subdued, just now, to bear the hearing of such things. Shut up the house. Good night."

But all the servants persisted so strenuously in avouching the truth of what they had stated,

that Sir William came from his chamber, and said he would go out with them and see if the apparition was yet visible.

Poor man! he was at this time ill-calculated to dissipate the terror which had taken hold of his servants. Sorrow, want of food, long privation of sleep, the dismal business of the day, and then this phantom-story, had almost bewildered his faculties, and he descended the stairs, trembling and uncollected.

Before they had reached the bottom of the flight, one of the servants cried out with a wild voice, "Look sir—look!"

Sir William cast his eyes downwards, and lo! there—on the cold stone floor of the hall—lay a figure entangled in unseemly clothes, moaning and sobbing naturally. Its face was partially exposed. Sir William saw it. His senses seemed suddenly scattered; for, in a confused manner, he dropped on his knees by the side of the figure, and there remained a few moments in a speechless state with clasped hands, and vacant and immoveable looks.

At length, a weak, faltering, female voice was heard:—"I am afraid I have done wrong,"

it said; "but I must have been in a dream; do not be angry with me."

"God! God! my wife!" exclaimed the forlorn man. "How is this? No, no, no; it cannot be! *She* is in her tomb!—And yet this countenance and these grave clothes strike away my senses with wonder!—Bertha! Bertha! She cannot speak again. Yet she is not quite cold. What can this visitation mean? Bertha! Let me once more hear that voice. Silent! silent! —Lift her up. Look! it is herself, her own self; her lips move; and see, her poor face is wet with tears. God alone knows how this has come to pass; but I will thank Him for it everlastingly. There — gently, move her gently; lay her in my arms; and some one go before me with a light."

It was indeed his wife whom he embraced. He carried her to his chamber, laid her in the bed, left her alone with the women that they might substitute another garment for the shroud, and ordered warm restoratives to be prepared. With these he returned to the room, and administered them himself, though his hand shook visibly, no less for joy than from thrilling

wonder. He stood in presence of one risen from the dead. The solemn words of Paul the apostle rang in his ears: "Behold, I show you a mystery!"

Having slept two hours, Bertha opened her eyes, saying,

"Are you there, my dear? let me hear you speak. Something strange has happened to me, I am sure. Have I been delirious? I wish they had watched me better; for I am certain I have been wandering out in the open air. It terrifies me to think of it. The dream I have had since I saw you, dear husband, last night, presses on me with an intolerable sense of reality. It must have been those ghastly visions which scared me out of the house in my sleep. I am full of pain. My feet are sore and bleeding. Reach me your hand, and comfort me with your voice."

Fanshaw's wondering perplexity was increased, rather than allayed, by these words. He knew not how to answer. At length, he said,

"Be comforted, dear Bertha. Your nurse has been remiss; and thus something has happened,—I scarcely know what or how. It has

been a dream—a sleep-walking—a delusion—nothing more."

"Could it really have been nothing more?" asked she, gazing with a painful scrutiny into her husband's face. "And yet I fancied I was just now staying obstinately, though unwillingly, in a painful, dreary, dark place, and was startled there by a sudden rush of cold wind. I seemed to fall many times, and to bruise myself exceedingly in endeavouring to struggle out towards the light. This *must* have been a dream. But I am *certain* I have been wandering out of doors in my sleep; for I thought I should have gone mad when my senses awoke and I found myself alone, barefooted, wrapped in a trailing night-dress, with the silent park stretching far around me. How could this have happened, dear Fanshaw?"

"We will talk of it some other time," replied Sir William, evading a question to which he could not satisfactorily reply.

"And tell me," resumed she, "why do you look so wretched and disconsolate? and why do the servants weep so? I thought they were in black when I came in; but my eyes were weak

and deceived me. I have endeavoured, but in vain, to recollect any circumstance connected with my leaving the house."

Her husband shook from head to foot at this. The coffin and the hearse swam instantly in his eyes. He was sick at heart with the oppression of a mystery; but he looked at his wife again, and blessed heaven.

Having addressed a few cheering words to her, and promised not to leave her side, he exhorted her to be composed, and endeavour to sleep. During the whole night, with but slight intermission, Fanshaw's eyes were fixed on his wife's face, in the fear that she might relapse into her former insensibility. His conjectures were busy in attempting to account for the wonder of Bertha's escape from the tomb; but his utmost ingenuity of surmise was dismissed as soon as conceived; and at length, he took refuge in the belief that an astounding miracle had been wrought.

* * * * * *

In the morning, the whole thing was explained. Some rustics, passing by the church,

observed it to be open; and, going in, saw that one of the family vaults was unclosed, and that an empty coffin was in it. This information they carried forthwith to the sexton, who, alarmed at the probability of being detected (as some one might have seen him escaping by the moonlight), and fearing that his guilt would seem greater than it was, went to the hall, and confessed the whole affair, making a restitution of the locket, but declaring that he knew nothing whatever of the removal of the corpse.

He was readily enough forgiven, and, as was said, rewarded. Lady Fanshaw had evidently been buried in a trance; it was of the utmost importance that the interment should be kept from her knowledge. The sexton was enjoined to silence,—a mandate which, on every account, he felt disposed to obey; though it was not so easy to quell the babbling tongues of the villagers.

Another source of disquietude remained: when the lady recovered sufficiently to go out, every object she saw in the direction of the church perplexed her with a dim and uncomfortable reminiscence. She might some day stumble on

the truth; and, in fear of this, Sir William
his estate, and purchased another in a dis
part of the country.

In this latter place, Lady Fanshaw gave
to a large family, and lived many years with
husband in health and comfort.

THE FARM-HOUSE,

A STORY OF

MONOMANIA.

Why, then, poor mourner, in what baleful corner
Hast thou been talking with that Witch, the Night?

OTWAY.

THE FARM-HOUSE.

SILENCE and seclusion are often the nurses of wisdom: they prompt meditation, and induce study. But they exert this beneficial influence only on strong and healthy minds: upon the weak, they prey like demons, either nourishing unhallowed thoughts, begetting strange delusions, or yielding their victim to the torture of some wild monomania.

The following incidents occurred in the year 1792.

Finely situated, though lonely, was the farm-house of Leonard Haselhurst, in Wiltshire. If the domestic comforts of a pleasant home, monied competence, fertile lands, a good wife, and healthy

children, could make a man happy, Haselhurst might have revelled in absolute content; and so he did, for several years after he had inherited the property realized by his father. But, alas this *worldly* fortune was not his only inheritance: he had derived from nature a mind of morbid sensitiveness; and, in the above-mentioned year, the gloomy and disastrous state of Europe, when the French revolution had nearly reached its climax of horror, sank into his soul and depressed his faculties.

Leonard was a loyal and religious man; and he trembled to think, as was but too probable, that the democratical mania would destroy the political and ecclesiastical institutions of this country. Riots had broken out in different parts of England, particularly at Birmingham and Manchester; Jacobin clubs were held in London and the provinces; doctrines of equality were openly asserted; societies were formed for the express purpose of corresponding with the levellers of Paris; tumultuous and seditious meetings disturbed the peace of our land, and symptoms of anarchy were everywhere visible.

All this distressed Haselhurst beyond measure.

Nevertheless, had he been blessed by neighbours in whose society the current of his thoughts might have received a new direction, he would possibly have escaped from the shadow of those heavy clouds of imagination that hung over him like a pall.

And yet nothing could be more cheerful than Leonard's household—nothing prettier than his residence—nothing snugger than his homestead—nothing more abundant than his barns and ricks and poultry-yard—nothing more health-inspiring than the breezy tract of country by which his farm was surrounded. But it was solitary; and solitude was a curse (though he did not distinctly apprehend it) to Farmer Haselhurst.

The situation of his dwelling-place was on one of those broad and undulating downs which stretch over part of the county of Wilts, and which give, especially to the vicinities of Salisbury and Marlborough, so lonesome a character. In a certain direction, the extent of the green plain spreading itself around Leonard's habitation, could not be traced. Nothing interfered with the sweep of the eye to the far horizon: no houses, no hedges, no streams, no groups of wood,

no white road with moving objects. But at the back, the view, though still expansive, was determined by a swelling upland, crested for several miles with a thick grove of various trees, broken in its outline, by little inlets or glades—*estuaries* (so to speak) of open land into forest borders.

This was the only change presented by earth to break the wide uniformity of prospect from Haselhurst farm; unless a variety might be obtained in summer from the motley-coloured crops, exhibiting patches of bright gold, sober brown, glowing purple, tender green, or deep emerald. The air, indeed, at times, was busy with its shifting pageant of clouds, seen to unusual advantage in that open place—glorious apparitions which invest the face of heaven with endless diversity of form and tint, presenting to the mariner, or town-dweller, or sojourner on monotonous plains, a series of rich and gorgeous pictures—*sky-scapes*—which redeem the uninteresting sameness of nearer objects. With unapproachable grandeur has Shakspeare given a representation of "cloud-land," wherein the drawing and colouring approach the solemn mystery of Nature herself:

"Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish;
A vapour, sometime, like a bear, or lion,
A tower'd citadel, a pendant rock,
A forkèd mountain, or blue promontory
With trees upon 't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air." *

Scenes of this kind, however, have little movement and no sound: they feed the melancholy of a hypochondriacal man: they have nothing wherewith to put life into the stagnation of sick thoughts.

But if such was the character of this far-spreading scene, the farm-house, in itself, was exceedingly picturesque and cheerful. The main part of the dwelling was covered by a ponderous roof, having two dormer windows breaking from out its red and sloping pantiles, like diminutive huts. At each side of the front, was a wing with a sharp and peaked top, being, indeed, the gables of other buildings joined to the centre, but running at right angles with it. The entrance-porch, festooned with creeping plants, intermixed with honeysuckle and monthly roses,

* "Antony and Cleopatra," act iv. scene 12.

had a room over it, and was covered by a separate roof. Of the lower apartments, flanking the porch, the windows descended to a soft lawn forming part of the garden; and the grey stone walls of the structure were enlivened by the differently tinged foliage of trees trained against them. The winding gravel walks and circular patches of short, well-shaven turf, seen from this aspect of the dwelling, almost forbade the idea of its being a farm-house. But the well-stocked yard in the rear, crowded with ricks of hay and other agricultural produce, attested its real character. The whole was enclosed with the rough stone wall, constructed without mortar, which is common to that part of Wilts, and its neighbouring shire of Somerset.

It was unlucky, as far as his mind was concerned, that Haselhurst should have succeeded to a handsome property. Had he been obliged to toil for the acquisition of money, as his father had done, and attend the markets personally, the ideas which now were a source of torment, could not have exerted such mastery over him. His wife saw with pain his deepening melancholy; *and to her* solicitations that he would go to the

market-towns, he turned a deaf ear. He could afford to be a "gentleman-farmer;" the disposal of his produce could be managed by deputy.

Of the care and culture of his land, however, he himself undertook the superintendence; and he would frequently be abroad, without a companion, overlooking the growth of his crops and the tillage of his acres. He was diligent, moreover, in the supervision of his accounts, so that any fraud in that way was impossible. Thus, as his farm was on a large scale, as his domestic expenses were not great, and as he saw no company,—from being originally rich, he became richer, until, as a measure of precaution against the levelling and destructive spirit of the time, when he believed property in land to be peculiarly insecure, he resolved that he would bring up his sons to liberal professions, but that not one of them should become a farmer.

We have said that for several years after Leonard came into possession of his farm, he was happy and content; but he was never gay. And even then, a sagacious observer might have detected the seeds of a malady which, in its development, would be likely to assume a formid-

able shape. Still, the triumphant spirit of young manhood kept it down; and it was only when his children approached adolescence, that his nerves began to give way.

Haselhurst had three sons and one daughter, and he now felt that parental anxiety was a weighty and a fearful thing. Was it likely that all his offspring would grow up and thrive, as he had thriven? Might not one of his sons become dissipated, and so bring a blot upon his name? might not another be doomed to encounter crushing misfortunes? or, worse than all, was it not possible that they should by and by be tainted with the revolutionary opinions and infidelity with which the detestable and sanguinary anarchists of France had inoculated many Englishmen? The times were fearful; and Fate might have in store for him many evils. If his sons were thus exposed to a baneful chance, it was also possible that his only daughter might be reserved for the irremediable wretchedness of an unhappy marriage.

Thus industriously perverse was Leonard's gloomy spirit in anticipating misfortunes! But *though* he brooded over his fears, he was not

idle in devising means by which such contingencies could best be averted; and it occurred to him that the safest method of regulating the disposition of his children, and keeping them in the right path, was to bestow upon them a good education.

With this view, he sent his eldest son, Martin, to the well-known public grammar-school at Bath, intending that the others should follow when they were old enough. From time to time, he received from one of the tutors of the academy, such good accounts of young Haselhurst's progress in his studies, and of his many virtues, that our farmer was confirmed in his opinion that he had taken the true means to ensure the future respectability and happiness of his son.

But Leonard seldom heard from the boy himself; and even his few letters were brief, and not written with the elasticity of spirit belonging to youth. The farmer, however, whose mind was pre-occupied with an idea that he had taken the wisest step for his boy, failed to perceive these symptoms.

Notwithstanding the comfort derived from a notion that his son was fitting himself to become

a good member of society, Haselhurst's melancholy increased upon him. Autumn had arrived; harvest was over, and the busy hands which had enlivened the solitude of the farm, were dispersed. Silence domineered again over the whole vicinity. Meantime, accounts, more alarming than ever, were in circulation, not only as to the desperate state of neighbouring nations, but as to England itself. Tom Paine's execrable book, called "The Rights of Man," was in universal circulation. Riots increased in every part of the kingdom. The spirit of rebellion was abroad. Assassinations and massacres were common things on the continent, and might become so among us.

Winter came on. To the loneliness of Haselhurst farm was now added the desolation of frost and snow and howling winds. But what need the inmates of that comfortable mansion care for the savage nature of the weather? Though a bleak and freezing wilderness was around them, warmth, light, and plenty were within their walls. With roaring fires, soft beds, abundant food, and generous liquors, they could defy the ceaseless, ice-blowing winds, and the long darkness of the surrounding wild. To Leonard,

however, these consolations availed little; he could not shake off his forebodings.

One night, when he was seated alone with his wife, he said, "Esther, my dear, we fancy ourselves in security; but a terrible time is coming on us."

"You are deceived Leonard," said she—"deceived by low spirits; you must rouse yourself. What have we to fear?"

"Is it possible," returned the farmer, "that you can be blind to the signs of the times? A diabolical spirit is abroad, and will overwhelm us all. Look at the horrible events in France—the inhuman butchery of three thousand men and women in Paris last September—the approaching execution of the poor, meek Louis—the reign of terror!"

"It will not approach our shores, Leonard," responded Esther. "The faith, the loyalty, the steadfastness of our middle-classes will save us."

"How know we that?" demanded Haselhurst. "Did not that fiend, Ankerstroom, murder the King of Sweden in the spring of this year? and only last month, were not five hundred white people butchered by the black devils of St.

Domingo? Are not these atrocities perpetrated in the name of Liberty and Equality? May God," continued he, rising and smiting the walls of the apartment—" may God strike those pernicious words out of human language! 'There's nothing level in our cursed natures but direct villany!' Did not the ferocious mutiny of the Bounty indicate the general rage of insubordination? But vengeance has fallen at last on some of the evil-doers. Three of those ocean-ruffians have met their doom on the gallows; there's some comfort in that—some comfort! Blood will have blood!"

"Leonard," said his wife, quietly, and no longer attempting to argue with him, "it is very late—near midnight. You are excited—you want sleep. See, the fire is going out; let us to bed. You will be better for a night's rest."

"Rest!" echoed he—"rest, on the brink of a volcano! I can't rest. Our country is in a flame!—our possessions are in danger!—we may be beggars to-morrow, if not corpses on our own threshold! Who can sleep with such perils raging about him?"

Though she was not altogether unprepared for

such an outbreak, Esther had never seen her husband so agitated as now. She was about to address some soothing words to him, when a low knock was heard at the porch door.

"What is that?" exclaimed Haselhurst, looking wildly about him. "We are beset. Call up the men! See to the children! Our time is come! But we will die with arms in our hands," continued he, taking a brace of pistols from the chimney-piece. "Don't be aghast, Esther; I told you what was approaching. *I* am prepared. All *you* have to do is to wake our men, and then stay by the children."

As Leonard's wife disappeared, the knocking was repeated. Our farmer took a pistol in each hand, uttered a short ejaculation to heaven, and then walked calmly to the door.

"Who is there?" demanded he. "What do you want? Speak!"

"Father!" was faintly exclaimed from without.

Haselhurst knew the voice. In an instant, amazed as he was, he drew back the bolts, opened the door, and his son Martin staggered in, and fell at his full length on the passage

floor. For a moment the farmer looked at his child in mute bewilderment. He felt his face; it was very cold: but as the youth breathed freely, Leonard concluded that he was suffering chiefly from the severity of the weather. Lifting him gently in his arms, he carried him to the parlour, laid him on the rug before the fire, and then went to the stairs to call his wife.

"Esther, Esther," exclaimed he, "come down. Here is our boy, Martin! Why he has arrived at this time of night, I know not; but nothing else is the matter. Come down."

The mother did not need a second bidding; but rushed to the room, and beheld her son. Without uttering a word, she knelt down by him, took off his sodden shoes, chafed his feet, raised him, and supported his head against her side.

"Make some warm wine and water quickly, Leonard," said she.

An instant sufficed to prepare the drink when Esther, having ascertained that the temperature was not too hot, held it to her child's lips, and administered it by slow degrees. By this means Martin was restored to consciousness, and could now be placed in an arm chair. He looked his

thanks, poor fellow! to both his parents, but did not speak.

"Ask him no questions to-night," whispered Mrs. Haselhurst to her husband; "that is, none connected with this unlooked-for arrival. Our only care must now be to recover him. We shall know all to-morrow." Then turning to her son, "Martin, my dear," said she, "shall I get some supper for you?"

The boy looked hard into his mother's face—it was a beseeching look, imploring her, as plainly as words could do, not to be angry with him. He then burst into tears.

"Be comforted, my dear, dear Martin," said she, kissing him. "We are glad to see you, love; very, very glad. Speak to him, Leonard."

"May Heaven bless you, my boy!" said Haselhurst, solemnly.

"See, dear Martin," resumed his mother, "here is supper for you. You must want it, I am sure."

"I have not eaten this whole day," sobbed the boy; "and I have walked a weary distance. It was painful, mother, to struggle through so much snow."

"Well, well, we will not talk of it now, dearest," said Mrs. Haselhurst. "Eat, my child; and after your food, you shall have a warm bed. Whatever you have to say, will best be said to-morrow."

Having taken the refreshment of which he was sorely in need, Martin repaired to his chamber; and when his mother had seen that he was comfortably asleep, she returned to her husband whom she found pacing about the parlour in great agitation.

"What can all this mean?" exclaimed he. "Has he committed some offence, and so been expelled? or have the boys emulated the madness of others, and rebelled against the authority set over them!"

"Nothing of the kind, I'll answer for it," replied Esther. "Our Martin is too good—too gentle—too obedient. All will be satisfactorily explained in the morning. Let us lie down with that conviction. Come, Leonard, come."

"The moral plague-spot is upon us—the dire frenzy of the age!" ejaculated Haselhurst, as he strode towards his room.

There was no sleep, however, on that night

for either of the parents. But the poor weary boy slumbered heavily, and appeared next morning at the breakfast-table with renewed strength.

His story was soon told. Martin was a thoughtful, studious, meek-spirited youth, unfitted to encounter the persecution with which boys at public schools torment all new-comers. For a time, he hoped to mitigate the brutality of his juvenile oppressors, by passive endurance. But, according to the malignity of some natures, this only made matters worse; and at length, like Cowper the poet, in a similar situation, he was so depressed, that the hours of play were to him hours of agony. He stood alone and unsupported, a mark for thoughtless tyranny.

The Christmas holidays drew nigh; and during more than a week before the actual "breaking up," the school was like a bear-garden. Because Martin was unresisting, every device was put in practice to harass and torture him; till, scared by his persecutors, the poor victim absconded; and, without money, travelled on foot from Bath to his father's house—a distance of about twenty miles. Hunger and cold, and clogging snow, kept him on the road till midnight.

In this account, Haselhurst deeply sympathized; but it opened new sources of uneasiness within his breast. Martin and his two brothers resembled each other exactly. If one was not fitted to buffet with the world, neither were the others. This reflection weighed deeply on Leonard.

"Cursed that I am!" exclaimed he to himself —"my children can never get on in this life! One of them has been tried, and has been forced, for want of spirit, to run away from school—an object for the scoffs and derision of other boys. He can never go back. The name of Haselhurst will be a theme for scorn and laughter! Cursed that I am!"

Poor, moody, hypochondriacal Leonard! hadst thou talked over this matter with other men, thou wouldst have found in it no cause for alarm. But thou wert solitary, and the insubstantial phantoms of thy brain obscured thy reason.

A little before twilight on the day following Martin's return, Haselhurst strolled out upon the lonely downs, and did not rejoin his family till between nine and ten o'clock. If they had been alarmed at his unusual absence, they were more so at his appearance when he entered the house.

His eyes were wild and his face haggard: he spoke incoherently to his wife and children. Mrs. Haselhurst did her best to compose him, and thought she had succeeded, for he laid his head on the back of his chair, and fell asleep.

In about half-an-hour he awoke, when, staring at the portrait of his wife, which hung over the mantel-piece, he suddenly ejaculated, "Who has done this?"

"Done what, Leonard?" said Esther.

"Look at the picture!" exclaimed he, starting from his chair. "The face—your face, Esther, has faded! What is that dim shape bending over it? God of heaven! 'tis a shadow of myself. Who has done it? Why are such devilish tricks played off upon me—upon me, who cannot bear them! Turn it to the wall—I will not look upon it!" *

The insanity of the poor man was now evident. He had brooded over imaginary disasters until his faculties were overpowered.

Assistance and advice could not be procured

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* This incident of the picture is derived from Hone's "Table-Book."

at that late hour; and Mrs. Haselhurst, after vain attempts to convince him of his delusion, succeeded in persuading him to seek repose. When she herself retired to her chamber, she found her husband apparently asleep; therefore, hoping that his paroxysm was over, and that slumber would restore him, she offered up a prayer for his preservation from the worst of earthly afflictions, and consigned herself to the rest she so much needed.

But who shall describe her consternation on awaking in the morning? Her husband was not by her side! Almost wild with apprehension she hastily wrapped herself in a dressing-gown, and went to the house-door. It was bolted, as she had left it the night before. She then opened the parlour door, and encountered a blast of cold air. The window had been thrown up! Haselhurst had stealthily left the house this way.

Bewildered, frantic, fearing the worst, the poor woman—for it was now dawn—gazed around her in every direction. A terrible sight soon met her eyes. Two men of the farm were seen bearing between them a human body, of which the head was frightfully disfigured. The

truth was now apparent, and Esther, uttering a piercing scream, fell senseless on the floor.

Unhappy Haselhurst! waking from a delirious slumber, he had left his bed without disturbing his wife—had entered the parlour, taken one of his pistols, and then opening the window, left the house. Having withdrawn himself to the extremity of the inclosure, in order that the report of the weapon should not reach the ears of his family, he then and there shot himself. His body was found by two of his men, as they were going to their early work.

THE END.

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